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editor's letter

For many of us, May is synonymous with the RHS Chelsea Flower Show. This year the event looks set to be a particularly fine one, featuring gardens from some of the most talented designers in the UK. For insights into nine of the contenders vying for the coveted Best in Show, turn to page 35. You'll also find our pick of interesting products, new plants and trends on pages 53, 50 and 46. The team and I will be at the show (22-26 May) to record exclusive podcasts with gardening VIPs, which you'll find at www.gardensillustrated.com. If you're there, do visit our stand on Eastern Ave 98. Sarah Price has not only been busy with her third Chelsea garden (page 36) but has also been designing, especially for our readers, some pretty planting ideas for containers (page 64). Arne Maynard, another hot favourite this year, continues his Design Ideas series, this month looking at knot gardens and parterres (page 102). On a separate note, *Gardens Illustrated* is involved in a lovely, albeit much smaller show, at Coombe Trenchard in Devon. Turn to page 12 for details. We'd love to see you there.

Enjoy the issue,

Juliet

Sarah Price shares her ideas for summer containers on page 64.

The Garden Festival at Coombe Trenchard is previewed on page 12.

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The latest and most recent editions are now available on Apple Newsstand.

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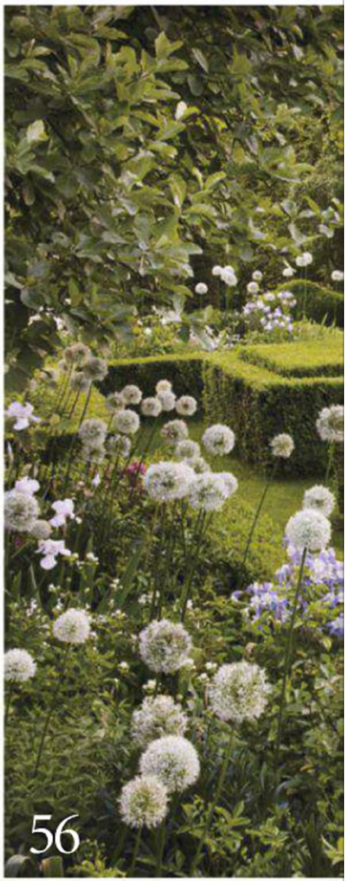
ANDREW MONTGOMERY

contents

MAY 2012



COVER IMAGE

Lupinus 'Masterpiece' by Jason Ingram. See page 24 for Chris Marchant's choice of May plants

on the cover

GORGEOUS GARDENS packed with planting ideas in our featured gardens on pages 56, 80 and 88

35 **Chelsea Flower Show** Your 20-page preview

64 **Pretty pots** Sarah Price's inspiring containers

12 **New *Gardens Illustrated* Festival** Arts & Crafts Garden Festival at Coombe Trenchard

102 **Knots & parterres** Garden design ideas

RHS Chelsea preview

35 **Welcome to Chelsea**

36 **Designers and show gardens** We look at the challengers for Best in Show 2012

46 **Chelsea trends** Show gardens themes and ideas

50 **Perfection in the pavilion** New plants and exciting displays at the show

53 **Shopping at Chelsea** The latest garden goodies

plants & planting

24 **May plants** Clever planting options for early summer, from nurserywoman Chris Marchant

64 **Year-round pots** Follow Chelsea designer Sarah Price's combination ideas and you'll be guaranteed to have delightful summer containers

70 **Plant profile: *Iris*** Older cultivars of bearded iris have a natural elegance, writes Michael Loftus

places

56 **Journey of discovery** In this Cotswold garden, formal lawns, woodland and a newly planted wild meadow are dotted with contemporary sculpture

80 **Hidden paths to a secret garden** We visit Sakonnet Garden in Rhode Island, where a plantsman has spent 30 years creating a micro-climate for some very special plants

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when you subscribe
to GARDENS ILLUSTRATED
today* – see
page 32

88 **Oasis: a watery wonderland** A network of streams and ponds is the perfect home to a collection of moisture-loving plants and follies at Westonbury Mill Water Gardens in Herefordshire

people

78 **Who's who** Meet Mark Gregory who's been rather busy lately – that's because he's built more Chelsea show gardens than anyone else

130 **Palely loitering** Get seed-sowing wrong and your compost heap will be strewn with anaemic rejects, says our columnist Frank Ronan

design

99 **Design news** The latest projects and events

102 **Design ideas** How to add pattern and structure with a knot garden or parterre

regulars

3 **Editor's letter**

6 **Contributors**

10 **Readers' letters** Share your thoughts on this month's Talking Point – the burning issue of drought in the garden

15 **Dig in: news** Including what's on this month and details of the first-ever Chelsea Fringe Festival

29 **Gardener's notes** What vegetables to sow this month plus fragrant flowers for moths

32 **Subscription offer** To celebrate Chelsea, we're offering 50% off the shop price*

53 **Shop front** New products coming to Chelsea

109 **Book reviews** New books for gardeners, from planting for bees to Mediterranean landscapes

114 **Crossword**

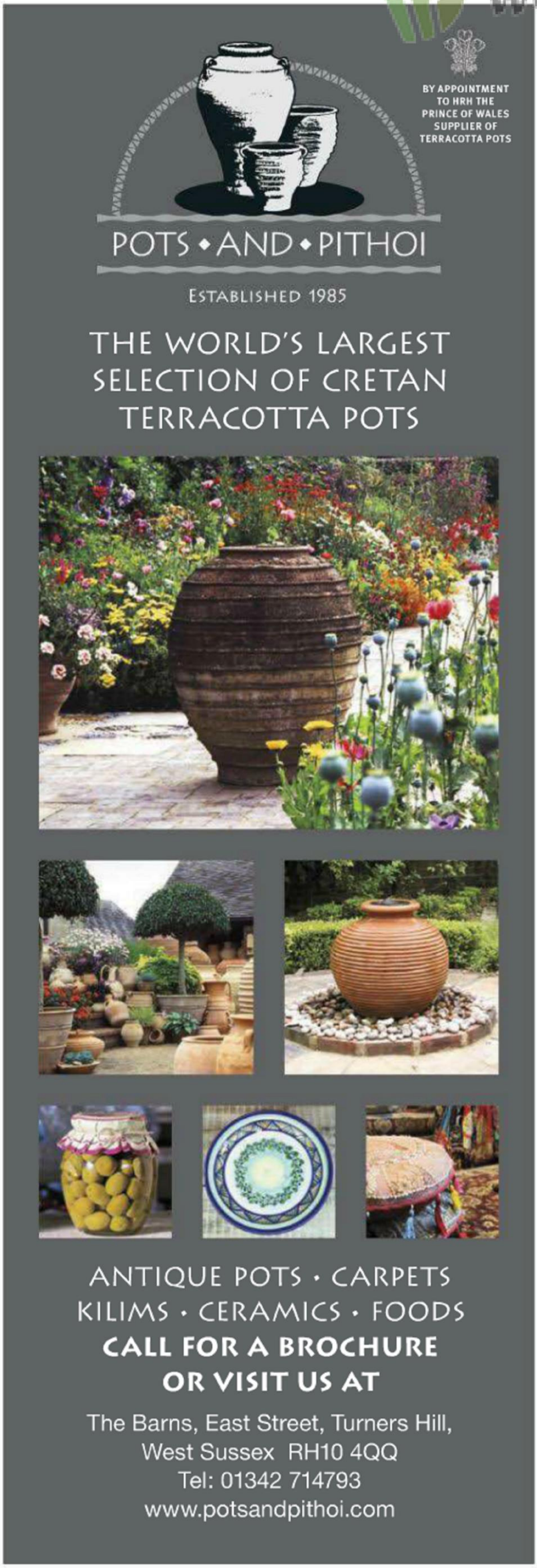
115 **Classifieds**

129 **Next issue** What's coming up in June

READER OFFERS

- Join us on 1-2 June at the GARDENS ILLUSTRATED Arts & Crafts Garden Festival at Coombe Trenchard, a delightful Edwardian estate in Devon – see page 12
- Explore the gardens of Scotland or the Mughal Palaces of North India on one of our reader holidays – see page 23

* Offer applies to UK Direct Debit customers only.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contributors

ALLAN POLLOK-MORRIS

Allan recently had a solo show of his garden photography at the Smithsonian Institute. He is the author of *Close: Landscape Design and Land Art in Scotland* (Northfield, 2010). His photographs of a Cotswold garden appear on page 56.

"I love Tim Rees's Mediterranean work, but felt very much at home in this stunning Cotswold garden."

MICHAEL LOFTUS

Michael Loftus founded Woottens of Wenhaston in 1988, a nursery which specialises in auriculas, irises, hemerocallis, pelargoniums and violas. He is passionate about irises, and his guide to classic bearded irises introduced before 1960 starts on page 70.

"Classic bearded iris are so much more elegant than the brazen creations of modern hybridisers."

CAROLE DRAKE

Photographer and writer Carole lives in Somerset and originally trained in fine art and art history. After working as an artist for some years she left the studio to get out into the garden. She wrote, and photographed, our feature on a Herefordshire water garden on page 88.

"Westonbury Mill is a delight; delicious planting combined with quintessential English eccentricity."

JANE SEBIRE

HELEN DILLON

Helen Dillon is a plantswoman and writer. She is the author of several books including *Helen Dillon's Garden Book* (Frances Lincoln, 2011). She lives in Dublin and her garden is open to the public. In this issue, she visits a Rhode Island garden on page 80.

"Sakonnet Garden is a rare example of a garden which manages to have terrific plants as well as brilliant design."

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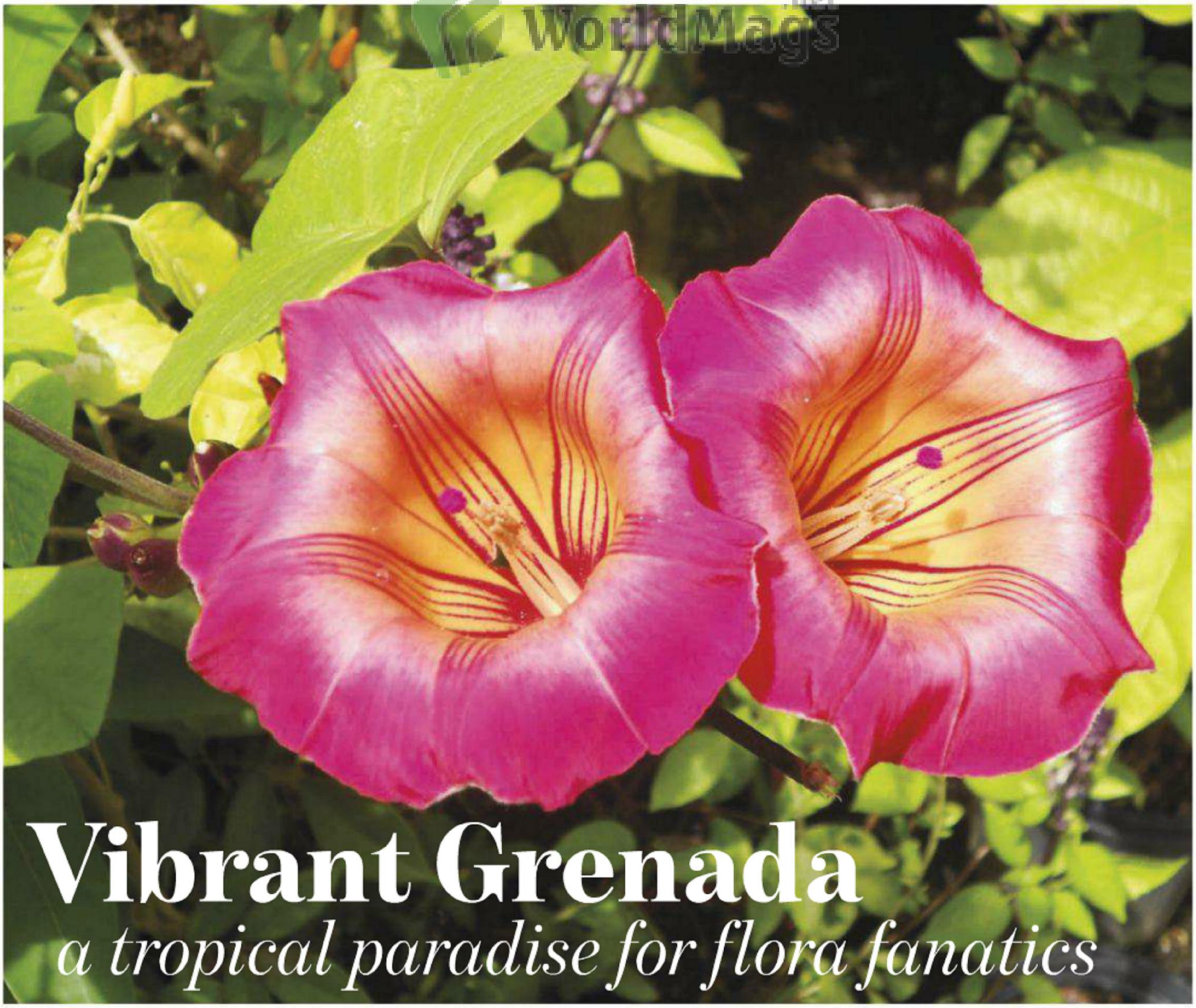

Vibrant Grenada

a tropical paradise for flora fanatics

The Caribbean island of Grenada, known as the Spice Isle, is a tropical paradise covered in vibrant rainforest, spice plantations and public gardens and nurseries bursting with exotic flora

Heliconias, gingers, musas, anthuriums, orchids and other rainforest plants abound all over the Caribbean island of Grenada, and their scents blend with the fragrant spices – including nutmeg, mace and cinnamon – on the gentle sea breezes.

Legend has it that a stick pushed into the ground will flourish in Grenada, and this natural bounty inspires an exhibit each year at RHS Chelsea Flower Show designed by Suzanne Gaywood MBE. Her team has taken inspiration from Grenadian beaches, forests and gardens creating a variety of settings that consistently showcase the pungent spices and vivid blooms of Grenada, efforts that have been rewarded with nine Gold Medals over the years.

Grenada embraces visitors with a warm welcome to its boutique hotels. Most properties – many with tropical gardens – are owned and managed by local families and as no beachfront building can be taller than the tallest palm tree, the island's natural charm is retained. British Airways flies from London Gatwick to Grenada twice each week, so escaping to the white sands and colourful rainforests is easy all year round. Renowned for its reef and wreck dives as much as its spice and cocoa plantations, Grenada boasts exuberant music festivals and carnivals, engaging sailing regattas and notable restaurants.

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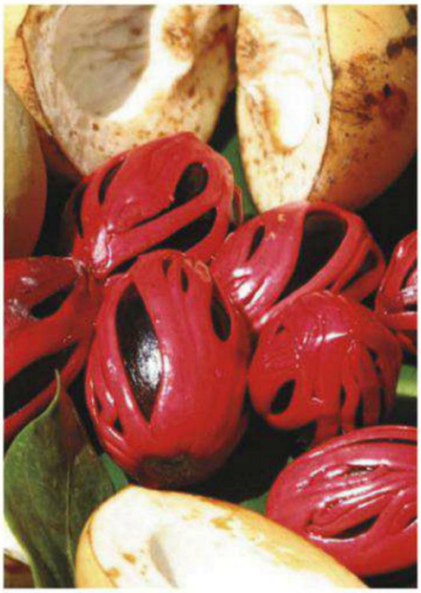
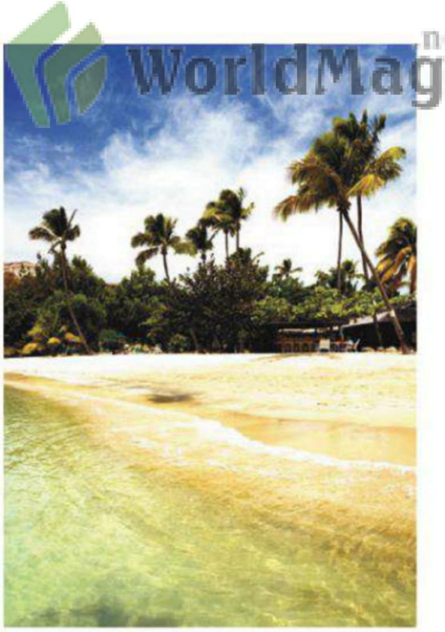
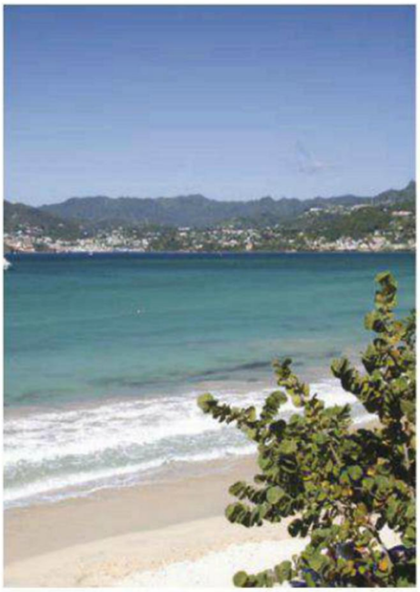
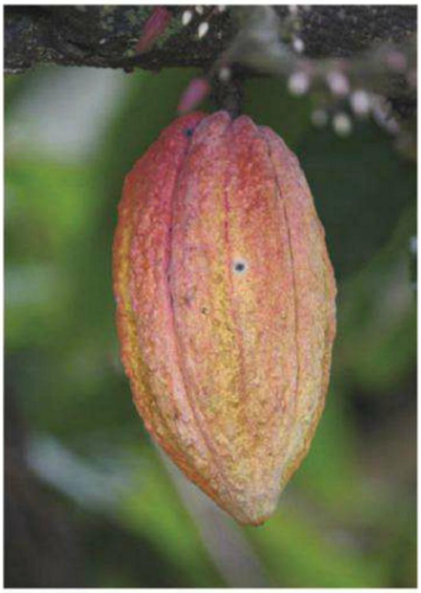


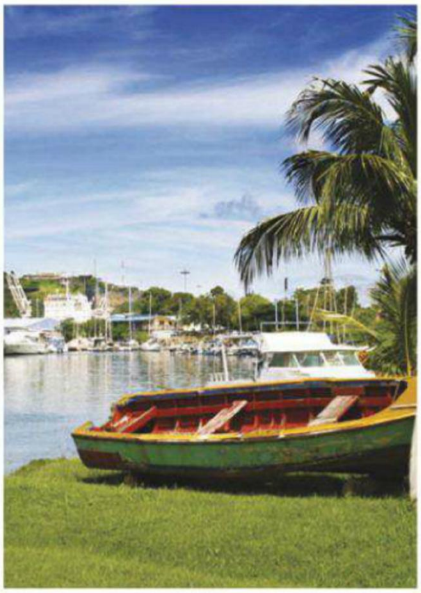


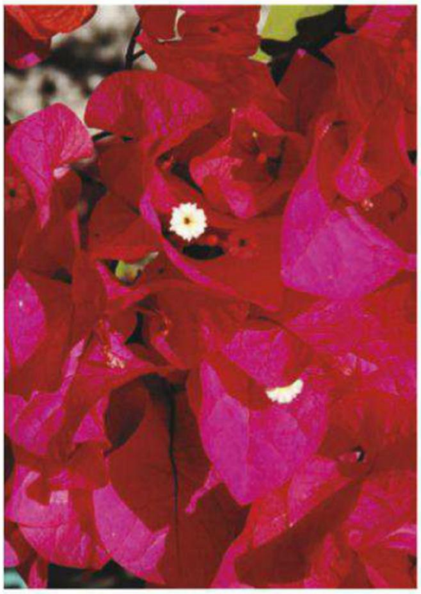
Legend has it that a stick pushed into the ground will flourish in Grenada

Main image: Stictocardia beraviensis. Clockwise from top left: nutmeg and mace; Calabash Beach; spices; Grand Anse Beach; bougainvillea, Grenada's national flower; marina in capital St George's; cocoa pod; Belmont Estate.









letters

Have your say – we'd like to hear your views, so please write to us at: GARDENS ILLUSTRATED, 9th Floor, Tower House, Fairfax Street, Bristol BS1 3BN, or email letters@gardensillustrated.com

Star letter

Healing power of gardens

Naomi Sachs

I enjoyed the GARDENS ILLUSTRATED feature on Naomi Sachs (issue 183, March) as it showed gardens are more than an aesthetic luxury. When I started working on the garden at a small care home I observed the lack of usable garden, just an empty space that created anxiety and confusion in the residents and was never used. We created a garden that fits the needs of those with dementia, with refuges and views, and designed elements that remove anxiety. It is filled with the laughter of residents, cutting flowers or sunning their legs, who believe it is theirs. They can explore their own garden, whenever they like, and be safe getting truly lost within it. I now understand the importance of experiencing the health, joys and stimulation of gardens for everyone.

Suzie Hartshorn, Cornwall

Debate

Chemicals in the garden

Readers responded to Talking Point *when Noël Kingsbury argued it is fine to use glyphosate (issue 182) and Mark Diacono said growing organically is the ethical choice (issue 183).*

- Noël Kingsbury needs to do more research before recommending glyphosate, as in 'Roundup'. It has been linked to mutations in amphibians, and has a longer half-life than listed. It is NOT considered safe by those who care about the environment.
Alice Chouteau, California

- I was horrified to read the advice suggesting 'Roundup' be encouraged. Studies in the USA and Canada have shown that it is a poison with a range of undesirable characteristics from killing beneficial insects, to being hazardous to earthworms, to reducing nitrogen fixation in the soil.
Maureen Hayes, BC, Canada

- Organic growing supports the intricate biological networks essential for a healthy planet, which are disrupted by chemical-based growing. The mass killing of invertebrate pests and weeds threatens bees and other insects and starves wild birds. Fertilisers overload rivers with nitrates, causing algal blooms and dead zones. Chemicals damage landscapes and threaten our health. I recommend Garden Organic (www.gardenorganic.org.uk).
Dr Gill Langley, Hitchin, Hertfordshire

Reader responds

Tasty day out

The article by Beth Chatto (issue 183) reminded me of the excellent day readers spent with the GARDENS ILLUSTRATED team in 2010 at her garden. Over lunch she offered a plate of plum tomatoes she'd grown. When one of the greatest plantswomen in the UK gives you a tomato do you eat it or keep the seed? I chose the latter, dried the seed and grew some excellent tomatoes. They were the first in fruit of all the varieties I grew and I was still harvesting in October.

Sue Hayward, Milton Keynes

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TALKING POINT

Matthew Wilson says that gardeners must be prepared to lose plants to drought

Adapt to drought

Much of the UK is under drought measures with hosepipe bans in place. The thought of a garden full of wilted plants is depressing. But although water use in gardens is only 3% of the UK total, it's important as it's entirely discretionary. The truth is, it is perfectly possible to have a garden that needs no artificial irrigation, and it's our style of gardening, rather than gardening itself, which is under threat from the current restrictions.

There are of course practical measures we can take to tough out the ban; mulching, accepting a brown lawn and so on. But if your garden has plants or features that are under water stress in a 'normal' season then this may well be the year that finishes them off. And if that is the case, we should see it as an opportunity to plant something more appropriate for the future.

Have lawns had their day?

Matthew Wilson is MD of Clifton Nurseries. In 2001 he designed a zero irrigation garden for the RHS.

- Please share your views. Write to us by post or email. We reserve the right to edit correspondence.

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Arts & Crafts Garden Festival at Coombe Trenchard

Friday 1 and Saturday 2 June 2012, 10am-5.30pm

We are delighted to present this exciting two-day garden festival celebrating the finest in gardening tradition, held in the grounds of the fine Arts & Crafts house of Coombe Trenchard in rural Devon. Alongside specialist nurseries selling an exciting selection of British-grown plants, there's a programme of expert talks in the GARDENS ILLUSTRATED Marquee. Headlining the programme is television gardener Alys Fowler with her talk on growing unusual vegetables (see opposite page). There's also the chance to watch craftspeople at work, as well as musical entertainment, Edwardian croquet on the lawn and a traditional Devon garden tea. It's the perfect way to mark the Queen's Diamond Jubilee weekend Full details at www.coombetrenchard.co.uk or call 01566 783179.

Venue	Coombe Trenchard, Lewtrenchard, Devon EX20 4PW
Date	1-2 June 2012, 10am-5.30pm
Entry	Advance tickets £6; on the gate £7; £5.50 for readers who show this copy of the magazine (or this page) on the gate; under 14s free; advance group bookings (10 or more) £5.50 each. Book at Cornish Riviera Box Office 01726 879500, www.crbo.co.uk

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READER EVENT AND TICKET OFFER

Traditional ... by Send a Cow

Join us in the GARDENS ILLUSTRATED Marquee for these expert talks

Friday 1st June

11am Jason Ingram, garden photographer, will talk about 'Photographing plants and gardens'

12 noon Angela Linforth, editor of *Homes & Antiques* magazine, will discuss the pleasures of 'Upcycling'

2pm Alys Fowler, TV gardener, columnist and writer, on 'Growing unusual veg and how to eat it'

3pm Ken Basterfield is a commercial beekeeper. He reflects on his '40 years among the bees'

Saturday 2nd June

11am Noël Kingsbury, planting design expert, in conversation with nurseryman John Carter of Rowden Gardens

12 noon Juliet Roberts, editor of GARDENS ILLUSTRATED magazine, discusses 'Planting in containers'

2pm Lia Leendertz, gardening journalist and author, on 'How to create the perfect night-time garden'

3pm Hannah McVicar, illustrator and print artist, talks about 'Floral and botanical print'

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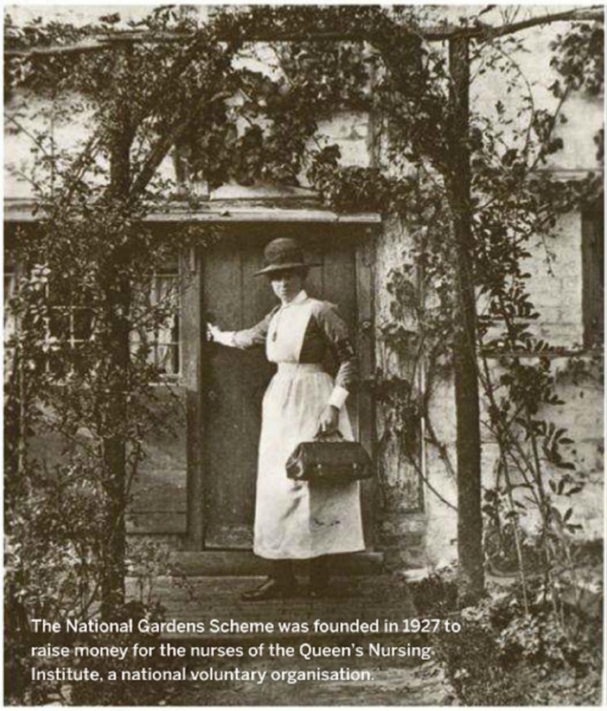
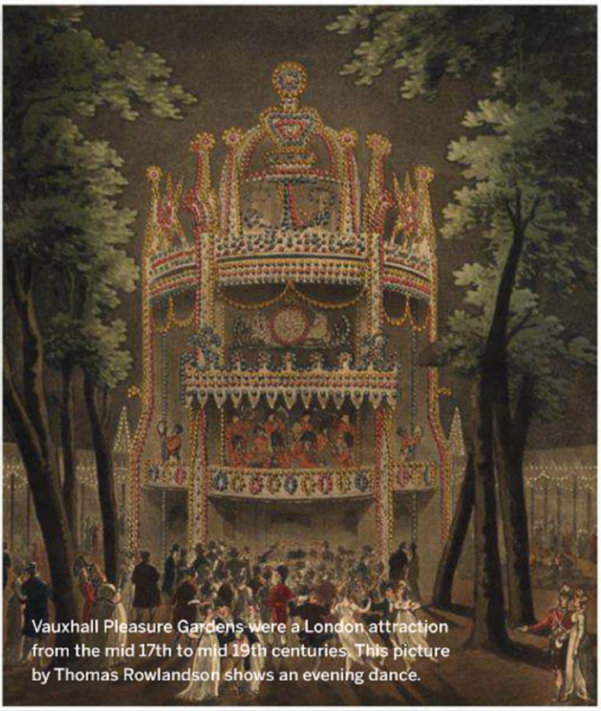

The National Gardens Scheme was founded in 1927 to raise money for the nurses of the Queen's Nursing Institute, a national voluntary organisation.

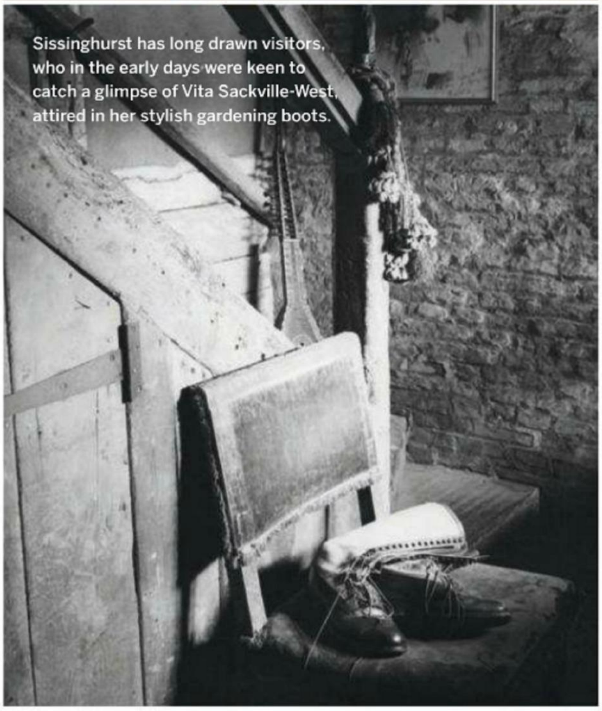

Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens were a London attraction from the mid 17th to mid 19th centuries. This picture by Thomas Rowlandson shows an evening dance.

EXHIBITION

Over the garden wall

We may love our own gardens – but we're rather fond of looking at other people's gardens too. In a new exhibition at The Garden Museum our long-standing preoccupation and sense of curiosity with gardening visiting is explored, while also celebrating the National Garden Scheme's 85-year history of opening gardens to the public in aid of charity. **Garden Open Today: 300 Years of Garden Visiting** gathers together painting and drawings that show the influence of garden visiting on society, style and fashion, beginning with the 16th-century drawings of Dutch painter and early garden tourist Anthonis van der Wyngaerde showing the gardens of the Tudor Royal Palaces. The exhibition also explains how the public enjoyed gardens such as Stowe and Ranelagh; the fashion for pleasure gardens, and Vauxhall in particular, and the acquisition by the National Trust of properties such Hidcote and Sissinghurst. It also recognises the work of the NGS in opening (this year) more than 3,600 private gardens.

- 24 April to 24 June. £7.50, The Garden Museum, Lambeth Palace Road, London SE1 7LB. Tel 020 7401 8865, www.gardenmuseum.org.uk (closed the first Monday of the month)


Sissinghurst has long drawn visitors, who in the early days were keen to catch a glimpse of Vita Sackville-West, attired in her stylish gardening boots.

VAUXHALL GARDENS, 1809 BY J ROWLANDSON; VITA SACKVILLE-WEST'S BOOTS C. EDWIN SMITH (1912-1971), RIBA PHOTOGRAPHS COLLECTION

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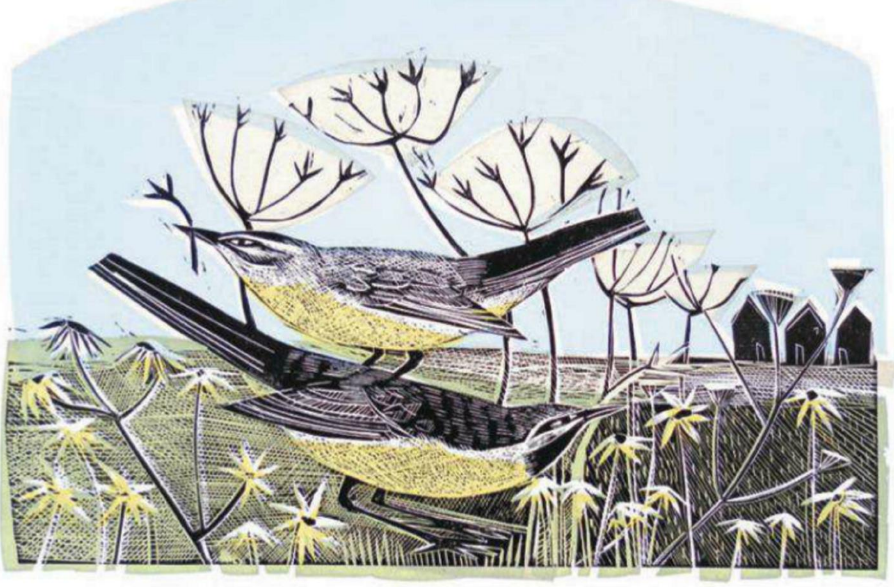

EXHIBITION

Garden inspired

Artist Angela Harding, whose work currently illustrates our columnist Frank Ronan's piece every month (see page 130) has an exhibition at Twenty Twenty Gallery, Much Wenlock in Shropshire. A selection of paintings and prints will be on show, some of which have featured in the magazine, alongside the gallery's selection of jewellery, ceramics, glass and furniture. 5-25 May. Tel 01952 727952, www.twenty-twenty.co.uk

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Following his own experiences, gardening presenter – and now nursery owner – Toby Buckland has produced Toby's Planting Powder. The sprinkle-on mix of beneficial bacteria and friendly fungi claims to improve a plant's root system, allowing for better water and nutrient uptake. Available via www.tobybuckland.com at £9.95 for a 225g pot.

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You can encourage insects into your garden by growing pollen-rich plants and by providing suitable nesting sites. These little bee houses are perfect for solitary bees, who will help pollinate your plants. Made from oak with a rusty steel roof, a set of three costs £25 from The Balcony Gardener. Tel 020 7431 5553, www.thebalconygardener.com

BEST VARIETIES

Make a late sowing

After recent RHS trials, these broad beans have been given an Award of Garden Merit (AGM) for yield, taste and appearance. 'Dreadnought' (Thompson & Morgan); 'Giant Exhibition' (DT Brown); 'Monica' (Mr Fothergill's); 'Perla' (Mr Fothergill's); 'Robin Hood' (Pro-Veg); 'Scabiola Verde' (Marshalls); 'Suprifin' (Mr Fothergill's) and 'Turbo' (Thompson & Morgan).

BROAD BEANS: KATE WHITAKER

NOSEY PARKER

We ask inquisitive questions to gardening people

Esther McMillan

Head gardener at Kelmarsh Hall, an 18th-century house in Northamptonshire, and the former home of influential interior designer and gardener Nancy Lancaster

What is your earliest garden memory? My father's soldier-like red tulips, and looking out of the window from morning prayers wishing I was the chap pushing the cylinder mower.

How did you become involved with gardening as a profession? When I realised during my Finals that it was pointless earning a decent wage only to pay someone else to garden for me.

What was your first gardening job? Volunteering at Arley Hall, Cheshire, then being paid to help in the nursery. Thank you Mrs Foster!

Who has inspired you the most? John Humphris VMH (RHS Victoria Medal of Honour), retired head gardener at Sutton Place, Surrey. He's a serious professional gardener and was a kind mentor. In my twenties, I also idolised Christopher Lloyd.

What is your top gardening tip? "For goodness sake, stop worrying!"

Which is your favourite garden to visit for inspiration? I love the timeless mistiness of Parham's borders. The ordered frame yard at West Dean inspires envy. And I like dreaming of Sutton Courtenay, Norah Lindsay's romantic Manor House garden in Oxfordshire, as seen in old photos.

What flower are you most looking forward to seeing in bloom in the gardens at Kelmarsh this May? Peonies all the way!

Who would you most like to have dinner with? There's an ongoing list on my kitchen pinboard: George Orwell, **Ry Cooder**, civil rights lawyer Clive Stafford Smith, Alistair Cooke, David Astor, Tom Lehrer and Miss Austen.

If you weren't involved in horticulture what would you be doing? I'd be a barrister.

What books are on your bedside table? Richard Mabey's *Weeds*, Olivia Manning's *The Balkan Trilogy*, Jane Brown's Capability Brown biography, Twigs Way's *Digging for Victory*, *Back Garden Seed Saving*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, a 1940s copy of the *Country Housewife's Handbook* and *More William* by Richmal Crompton. As you can see, I'm part way through a lot of things. Or maybe I just need to tidy up more often.

Not a lot of people know this about me... I have an inner **tap dancer** waiting to break out.

- Kelmarsh Hall is hosting a Hardy Plant Fair, 6-7 May, 10am-4pm, admission £2.50. On the Sunday there will be cooking demonstrations using produce grown in the kitchen garden. On the Monday, Esther will give a talk on 'Kelmarsh Gardens', 2-3pm, £5. To book a place on the talk call 01604 686543, www.kelmarsh.com

Diary

Enjoy floral displays at the Malvern Spring Gardening Show.

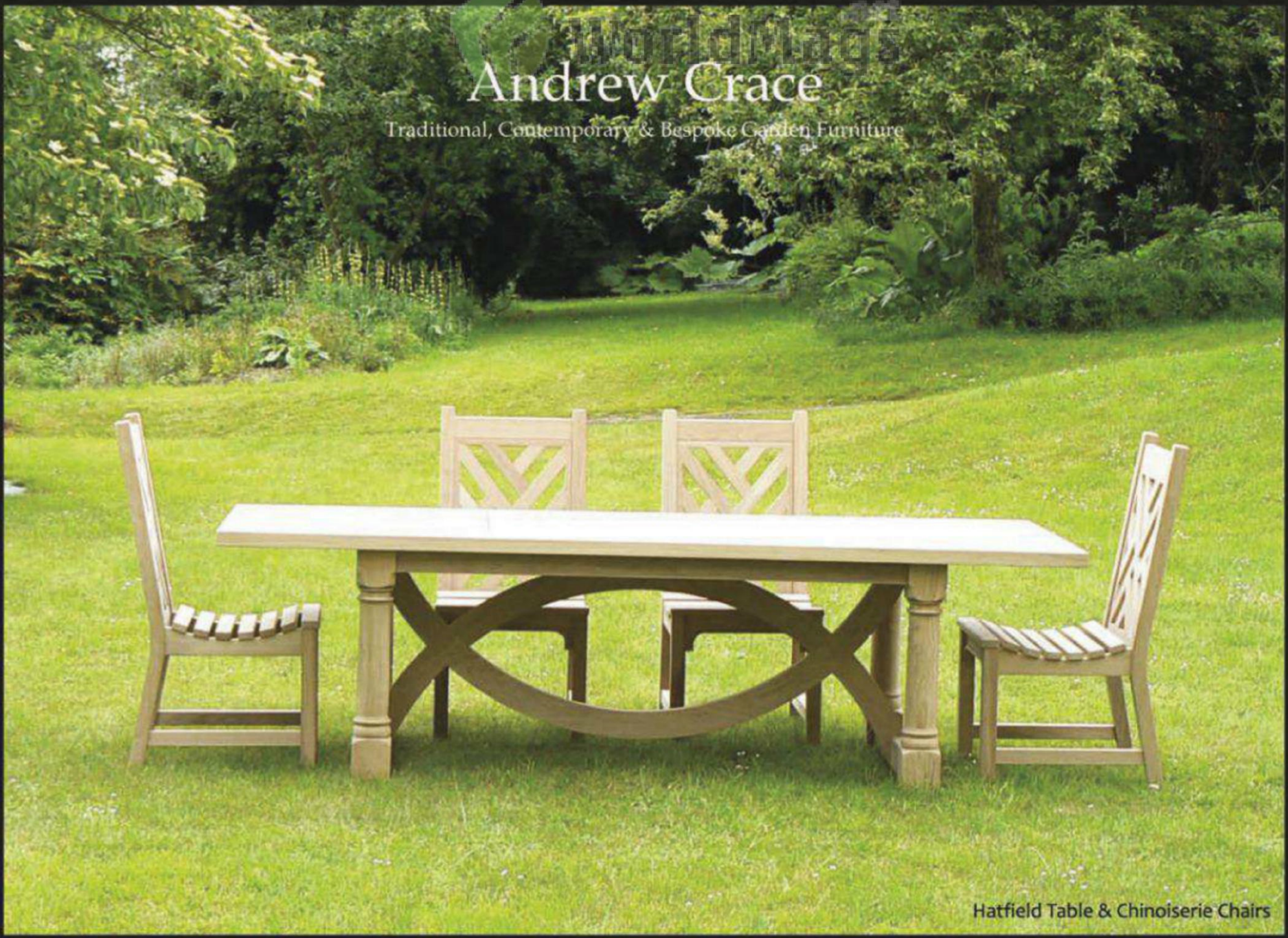
- **NSPCC's Open Garden and Plant Fair** at the rarely opened grounds of Saltwood Castle, home of the late Alan Clarke MP. 5 May, 10am–4pm. £5. Saltwood, nr Hythe, Kent CT21 4QU. Tel 01293 651840, www.nspcc.org.uk/getinvolved and go to 'Join an event'.
- **Malvern Spring Gardening Show** gardens, plant sales and the RHS Floral Marquee with over 100 nursery displays. 10-13 May. From £15 (discount for RHS members). The Showground, Malvern, Worcs WR13 6NW. Tel 01684 584924, www.threecounties.co.uk/springgardening
- **Bloom in the Park** Ireland's premier gardening event with show gardens, nursery displays and the Food Village promoting regional foods. 31 May-4 June, 10am-6pm. Tickets from €15 booked in advance. Phoenix Park, Dublin. www.bloominthepark.com
- **Hay Festival** Annual literary festival with speakers including Monty Don, Sarah Raven, Laetitia Maklouf and *Countryfile*'s Adam Henson. 31 May-10 June. Tel 01497 822629, www.hayfestival.com

GARDEN PERFORMANCE

Drama at the allotment

Among this summer's crop of outdoor garden performances is something a little more unusual from Yorkshire-based Mikron Theatre Company. Their latest show 'Losing the Plot' will be touring allotments, fields, polytunnels and village greens throughout the country with their tale of grow-your-own rivalries and community pride. The tour begins at the Netherton Moor Road Allotments in Huddersfield on 12 May and continues round the country until November. Find out more about the show and its locations on 01484 843701, www.mikron.org.uk

ESTHER MCMILLAN PORTRAIT: ANDREA JONES; RY COODER: REDFERNS / GETTY IMAGES; TAP SHOES: ART DIRECTORS & TRIP / ALAMY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Small but perfectly formed: Steve Wheen will create pothole gardens.

THE FIRST EVER CHELSEA FRINGE

The first-ever Chelsea Fringe Festival (19 May-10 June) will "burst out of the RHS show ground and spread the excitement and energy that fizzes around Chelsea Flower Show time," says director Tim Richardson. Anything goes, from avant-garde art to community projects – as long as it's about gardens, flowers, edible plants or the landscape.

The Chelsea Fringe involves a wide range of people and places throughout London and is run by a volunteer team of guerilla gardeners, designers, writers, and curators. It is independent of the Royal Horticultural Society but acting with its support. Below is a taster, with full details at **www.chelseafringe.com**

The Edible High Road by Abundance London will create a river of up to 50 fruit trees in Chiswick streets (later to be donated to community projects).

Community garden project **The Edible Bus Stop** is aiming to create an Edible Bus Route that takes in their original plot in Brixton and new plots in Clapham and Norwood. Plus they will be hosting pop-up garden events around Soho.

Open Garden Squares Weekend is the annual chance (9-10 June) to visit private spaces in London. This year 212 venues will be open – acting as a fantastic finale to the Chelsea Fringe.

The Oranges and Lemons Garden in front of St Leonard's Church in Shoreditch is being created by young designer Dan Shea. This is the 'bells of Shoreditch' church mentioned in the nursery rhyme and Dan will adorn the church's front with citrus-inspired plantings and areas to relax.

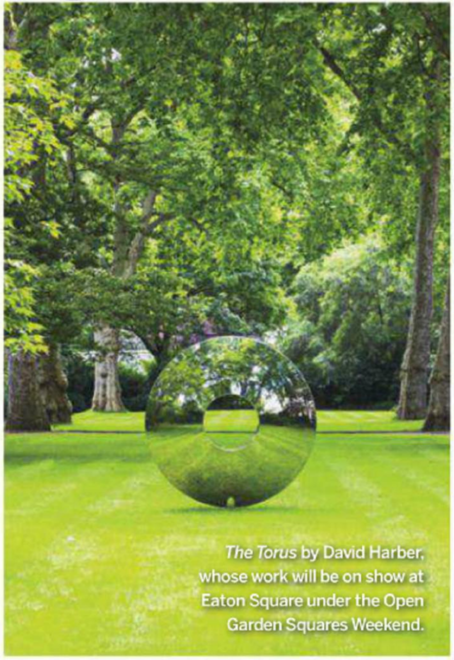
Steve Wheen, the 'pothole gardener', creates humourous little garden scenes in holes in London's roads. He will lead tours and build 'pothole gardens'.

Guerilla gardener Richard Reynolds will run tours of guerilla-garden sites, create a mobile-gardening initiative and also a guide to ways in which to 'Pimp Your Pavement'. Visitors can even create their own garden.

The Garden of Disorientation in Clerkenwell will be a hub for the Fringe, a venue for debate, films, chatter and art/design-related events, bringing together people who love gardens.

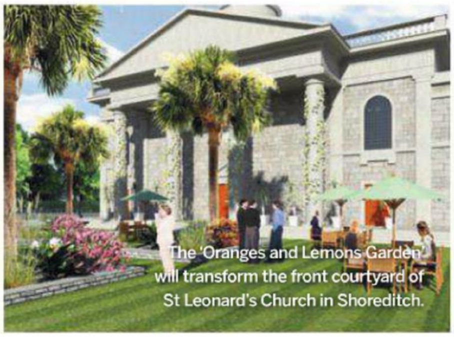
Also look out for... the **Fringe tea party** at The Garden Museum; **garden poetry** at the Libertine Pub, Borough; **compost heap tours** at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew; and evening openings under the **National Gardens Scheme**.

All events are subject to change. Please check www.chelseafringe.com for up-to-date details.



The Torus by David Harber, whose work will be on show at Eaton Square under the Open Garden Squares Weekend.

DAVID HARBER, OPEN SQUARES



The 'Oranges and Lemons Garden' will transform the front courtyard of St Leonard's Church in Shoreditch.

Look out for pop-up garden events on the streets of Soho.

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Ian Hamilton Finlay's garden at Little Sparta.

GARDENS OF SCOTLAND

31 August – 6 September 2012

Tour price £1,650

Not only will you discover some of Scotland's great historic and contemporary gardens, you are also invited to stay at the private homes of some of the garden owners, giving you a unique view of these properties not normally experienced by visitors. Centred around Edinburgh and St Andrews, the tour includes the renowned Little Sparta (pictured above), the globally important Edinburgh Botanic Gardens, and Cambo, with its mix of European-style planting design and British plantsmanship. You will also visit the contemporary art at Whitburgh House and Jupiter Artland and get a taste of Scotland's history of planthunting with the likes of Stella Rankin of Kevock Plants. Further visits include the Arts and Crafts garden The Murrell, and the splendid rock garden at St Andrews Botanic Garden.

TOUR LEADER **Dr Noël Kingsbury**
Noël is a lecturer and planting designer, and is known internationally as a writer on plants and gardens. His work appears regularly in GARDENS ILLUSTRATED.

Palace Gardens, Deeg, India.

MUGHAL GARDENS AND PALACES

29 November – 11 December 2012

Tour price £3,960

(Includes return flights from London)

The palaces and gardens of North India were built by the 16th and 17th-century Mughal emperors to house their great courts. As well as visiting some of the major sites and gardens, the journey also takes in many of the less visited yet stunning gardens and palaces in the region, thanks to the connections of your tour leader, the distinguished designer John Brookes. A number of special events have also been planned for the party. Throughout the tour you will stay in some of India's finest hotels and palaces. The tour begins in Delhi before moving on to Agra, Bharatpur, Jaipur, Bijaipur, Udaipur and finally to Mumbai. Highlights include Lodhi Gardens, Mehtab Bagh, Deeg, Amber Fort and Kumbhalgarh, not forgetting the stunning hotel palaces and the natural beauty of India itself.

TOUR LEADER **John Brookes MBE**
In a career spanning 50 years, John has designed more than 1,000 gardens and won four gold medals at Chelsea. His international travels have influenced his designs.

Booking details for both holidays

For further information about these trips, day-to-day activities, hotel accommodation and details of how to book, please contact Distant Horizons, 13 Melloncroft Drive, Caldy, Wirral CH48 2JA, UK

Tel **+44 (0)151 625 3425** Email **info@distanthorizons.co.uk** Website **www.distanthorizons.co.uk**

NOTE itineraries are subject to confirmation. Places are limited, so early booking is recommended.

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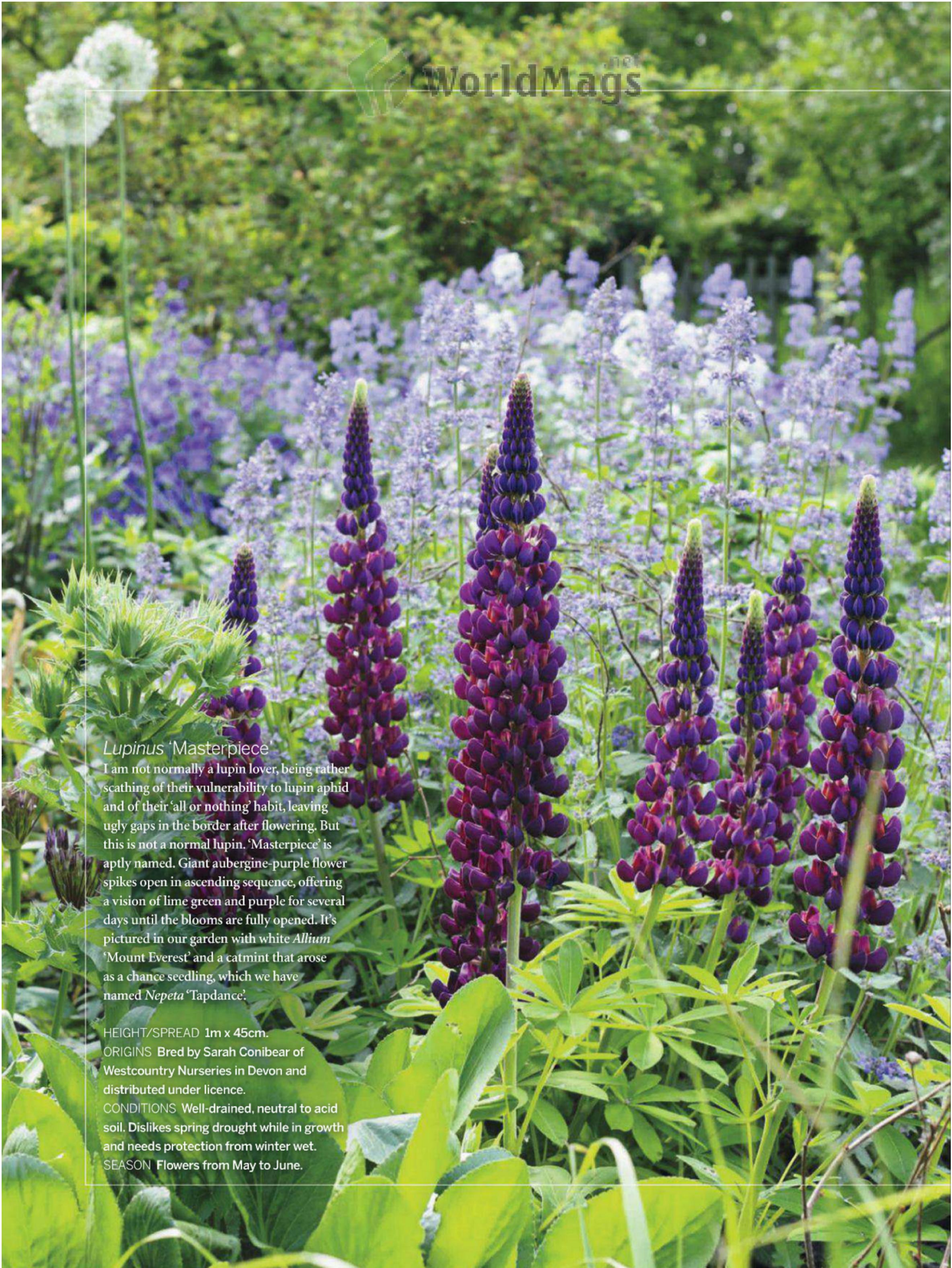
PICTURES (CAMBO); ALLAN POLLOK-MORRIS



Lupinus 'Masterpiece'

I am not normally a lupin lover, being rather scathing of their vulnerability to lupin aphid and of their 'all or nothing' habit, leaving ugly gaps in the border after flowering. But this is not a normal lupin. 'Masterpiece' is aptly named. Giant aubergine-purple flower spikes open in ascending sequence, offering a vision of lime green and purple for several days until the blooms are fully opened. It's pictured in our garden with white *Allium* 'Mount Everest' and a catmint that arose as a chance seedling, which we have named *Nepeta* 'Tapdance'.

HEIGHT/SPREAD **1m x 45cm.**
ORIGINS **Bred by Sarah Conibear of Westcountry Nurseries in Devon and distributed under licence.**
CONDITIONS **Well-drained, neutral to acid soil. Dislikes spring drought while in growth and needs protection from winter wet.**
SEASON **Flowers from May to June.**

WorldMags

May plants

Choose jewel-like colours and subtle shapes to set among the lush green growth of your early summer garden

WORDS **CHRIS MARCHANT** PHOTOGRAPHS **JASON INGRAM**

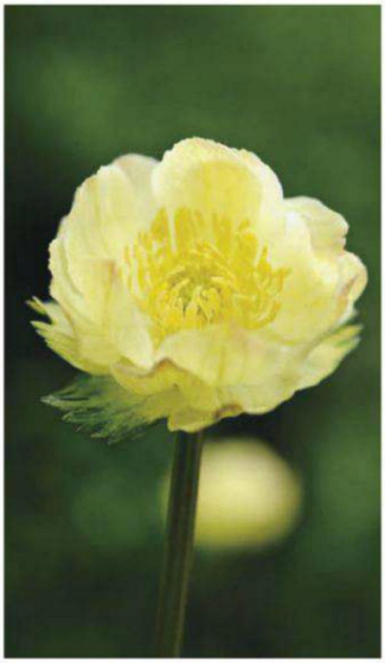
CHARLIE HOPKINSON

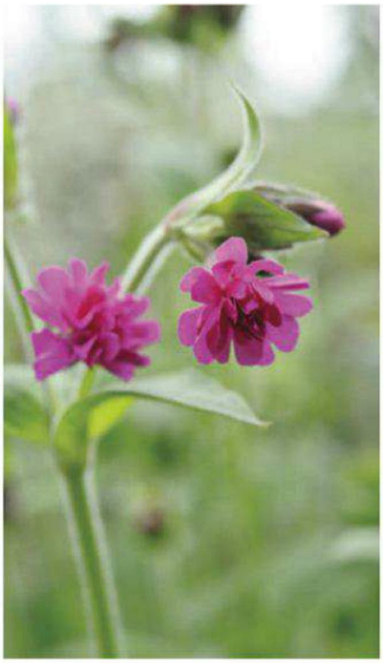
Chris Marchant is co-owner of Orchard Dene Nurseries in Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire, a wholesale grower specialising in hardy herbaceous plants

Trollius x *cultorum* 'Alabaster'

This is one for the pond side or wetter margins of the garden. In spring a chorus of yellows brightens our pond: *Caltha*, *Iris pseudacorus* and *Trollius* jostle for attention. Which is why this paler, cream-flowering *Trollius* earns a mention. The perfectly formed globular buds are fat and promising. Each snug petal is delicately outlined with a trace of pink, unfolding to reveal fully double flowers with a glorious ivory sheen. These grow easily among native plants such as shuttlecock fern (*Matteuccia struthiopteris*) and meadowsweet (*Filipendula vulgaris*).

HEIGHT/SPREAD 65cm x 30cm.
ORIGINS Trollius come from damp meadows of Europe, N Asia and N America. 'Alabaster' was bred by the Arends Nursery, Germany.
CONDITIONS Moisture-retentive, loamy soil.
SEASON May to June.





Silene dioica 'Firefly'

Introduced by Norfolk nursery Blooms of Bressingham, this red campion cultivar is sterile, so it harbours none of the spreading tendencies of many *Silene* species. When striving towards a balanced composition in the garden border, I prefer the brightest of flowers to be relatively small. This plant is unashamedly bright pink, and all the more glorious for it. I love the intensity of the tight, double flowers, branched and airy on upright stems and use it sparingly to accent the deeper, more moody violets of salvias and *Geranium phaeum*.

HEIGHT/SPREAD 80cm x 25cm.
ORIGINS *Silene dioica* is native to northern temperate regions of Europe.
CONDITIONS A wide range of free-draining soils, preferably neutral to alkaline.
SEASON May to June.

Salvia pratensis 'Lapis Lazuli'

The name of this plant is an anomaly, since the flowers are not the bright electric blue of lazurite. But sweeping that aside, this is one of the earliest of the salvias to send up its large, hooded flowers of lipstick-pink. If you seek robust and dry-tolerant colour in a sunny, lean soil, this ticks all the boxes. Moreover, you can have not one, but two flowering seasons each year, if you cut back spent flower stems in late May. At the nursery we keep these plants in a windy spot where watering is light. Undeterred, they stand strong, tall and upright.

HEIGHT/SPREAD 65cm x 40cm.
ORIGINS *Salvia pratensis* is widely distributed across Europe to Russia.
CONDITIONS Tolerant of broad range of well-drained loamy soils in a sunny aspect.
SEASON May-June and again in Aug-Sept.

Camassia leichtlinii 'Semiplena'

A modest outlay on bulbs can make an impressive display in grassland or orchard plantings. This semi-double form has much to recommend it, perhaps principally its long-lasting flowers. Opening about two weeks later than straight *C. leitchlinii*, its flowers also last around twice as long. Moreover, the flowers are of a delectable greenish ivory hue, fading up the long stem to a warm bronzy brown. The overall effect is attractive in bud, flower and decline. Flowers are sterile, so multiplication of clumps is by expansion and division, which helps to keep the flowering display on form.

HEIGHT/SPREAD Up to 1m x 35cm.
ORIGINS Western North America.
CONDITIONS Tolerant of dappled shade and heavy soils; needs moist soil in spring.
SEASON Late May to June.

Papaver orientale Goliath Group 'Beauty of Livermere'

There may be exuberant showgirl qualities about the flowers of the Oriental poppies, but many of them flower only briefly, or collapse on over-laden stems. With this form, stems are straight, upright and true, rising a good 50cm above the mound of foliage. Giant single blooms unfold to deepest blood red. In the border we have learned to nestle them among the beetroot-coloured foliage of annual *Atriplex hortensis* var. *rubra*, which happily frames the blooms before obligingly rising up to conceal them after flowering.

HEIGHT/SPREAD Up to 110cm x 80cm.
ORIGINS The species is from eastern Turkey, northern Iran and the Caucasus Mountains.
CONDITIONS Well-drained, fertile loam.
SEASON Flowers May to June.

Places to visit

Chris Marchant names some of her favourite gardens and other places to see plants at their best.

Ascott House is a National Trust property offering 30 acres of Victorian planting detail originally laid out by nurseryman Sir Harry Veitch and subsequently expanded along more contemporary lines. In the spring visitors are indulged with colourful carpets of bulbs. There is also a significant collection of fine trees set in parkland. Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire LU7 0PS. Tel 01296 688242, www.ascottestate.co.uk

A carpet of bulbs at Ascott, Leighton Buzzard.

COLIN STURGES/NTPL

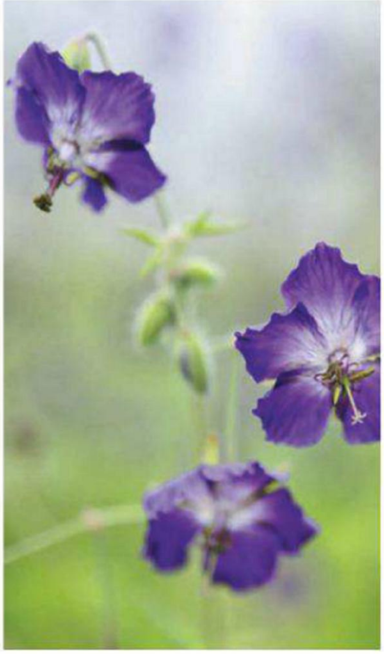
The classic William Kent garden at **Rousham House** is a favourite at almost any point in the year. At this time, the wonderful apple orchard comes into its own. Step through the door into a cloud of scented blossom. The 27-acre gardens have all the

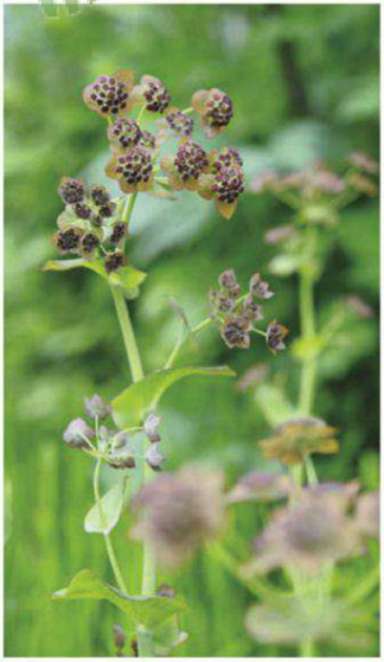
WorldMags

Geranium phaeum 'Lily Lovell'

This carries all the robust and trouble-free qualities of the *Geranium phaeum* species, but is distinct in the curious colour of the flowers, which open violet and fade to almost navy blue. I find this shade more uplifting than the sombre maroon of the native lady in mourning and a marvellous companion to all the lime greens and creams of spring. In our own garden, we use this threaded through Solomon's seal (*Polygonatum* x *hybridum*) and sweet cicely (*Myrrhis odorata*) on the wilder fringes.

HEIGHT/SPREAD 75cm x 30cm.
ORIGINS Mountainous regions of southern and central Europe; naturalised in UK. Cultivar introduced by geranium expert Trevor Bath.
CONDITIONS Most well-drained garden soils, from mildly acidic to alkaline.
SEASON May to June.





Bupleurum longifolium 'Bronze Beauty'

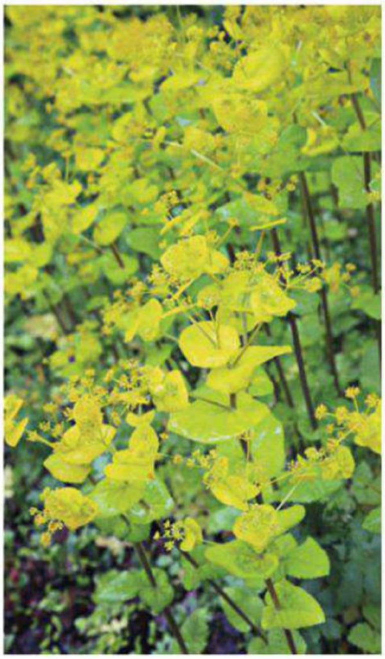
I first came upon this plant in the gardens of John Coke at Bury Court, in an area not generally on view. There, working in partnership with landscape architect Christopher Bradley-Hole, John has created an exciting tension between crisp, precise architecture and his own exuberant planting, which swells to great volume within the grid-like arrangement of formal beds. The colour palette is largely green, but scattered through are occasional jewels of flower shape and colour, all the better for being used sparingly.

HEIGHT/SPREAD 70cm x 30cm.
ORIGINS From central Europe into Siberia.
CONDITIONS Most well-drained soil in sun or light shade.
SEASON May to July.

Smyrnium perfoliatum

This subject has all the appeal of an uninvited but very entertaining guest at a party. Our frustrated efforts to grow it in pots under controlled conditions mean we have not yet managed to offer it for sale from the nursery. But, given the right shady, humus-rich woodland conditions in the garden, freely scattered seeds from this plant offer reasonable germination and will reward handsomely with a chorus of glorious limey flower heads in the spring.

HEIGHT/SPREAD Up to 70cm x 30cm.
ORIGINS Europe and Caucasus.
CONDITIONS Humus-rich, moisture-retentive soil in dappled shade.
SEASON Flowers May to June.



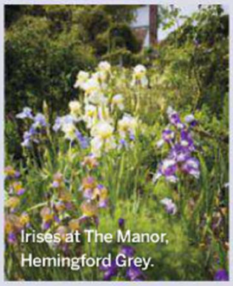
MARTIN HUGHES-JONES / GAP PHOTOS

The apple orchard at Rousham House.

ANDREW BASKOTT / ALAMY

majesty of a fine landscaped space, with niches of intimacy. Not open to children under 15. Near Steeple Aston, Bicester OX25 4QX. Tel 01869 347110, www.rousham.org

The Manor in Hemingford Grey is one of the oldest inhabited houses in the country. Lucy Boston, author of the Green Knowe children's stories, moved here in 1939 and created a 4.5-acre garden with the help of horticulturist Graham Stuart Thomas. A good collection of roses and the best of Sir Cedric Morris's irises were included in her schemes. Garden open all year; telephone or see website for details. Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire PE28 9BN. Tel 01480 463134, www.greenknowe.co.uk



Irises at The Manor, Hemingford Grey.

REX RICHARDSON / GARDEN WORLD IMAGES

On a much smaller scale, **Weaver's Cottage** is home to Sylvia Norton and a National Collection of sweet peas. But it is the owner's love of foxgloves that makes the garden a place of pilgrimage at this point in the season. 35 Streetly End, West Wickham, near Cambridge CB21 4RP. Open by appointment April to July. Tel 01223 892399.

A room with a view...

Conservatory blinds aren't just about making your room look good. They also do a very real job in the conservatory environment where outside temperatures can dramatically affect the room.

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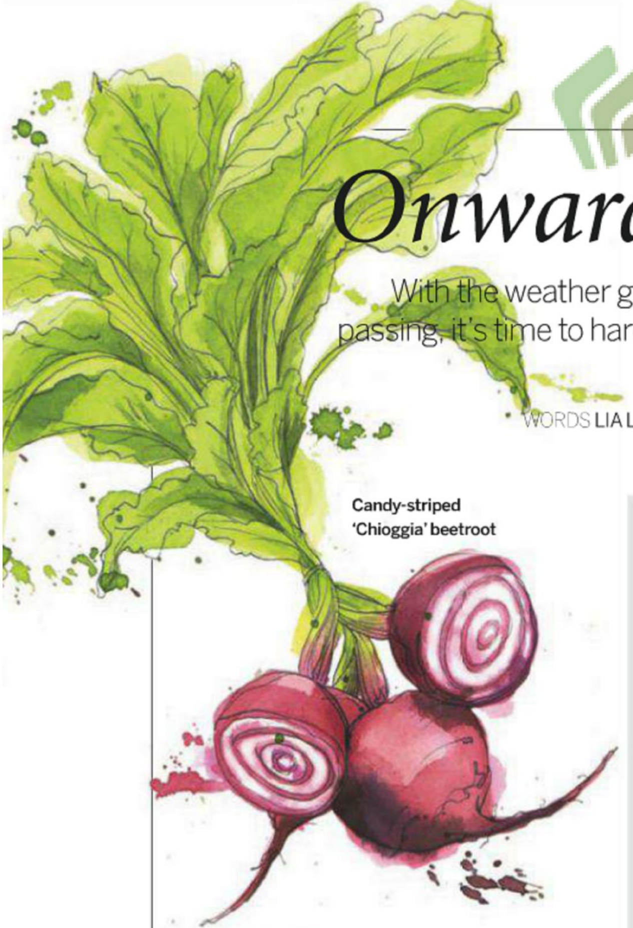
Onward and upward

With the weather getting warmer and the danger of frosts passing, it's time to harden-off plants and direct sow tender seeds

WORDS LIA LEENDERTZ ILLUSTRATION GEORGINA LUCK



Candy-striped 'Chioggia' beetroot

PRACTICAL JOB

Sow some beetroot

Fast becoming my favourite crop for ease, variety and tastiness, sow beetroot straight into the ground now for baby beets in six or seven weeks time, or fully mature roots if left longer. I grow candy-striped 'Chioggia' (shown above), yellow 'Golden' and 'White Detroit' alongside traditional dark red cultivars, sowing short rows every month so there are always sweet little roots to be had. I'm also growing beetroot leaf 'Bull's Blood' for purple-red baby salad leaves. All from Chiltern Seeds (www.chilternseeds.co.uk).

PRACTICAL JOB

Planting out

Mid-May is the time you can be confident that frosts have passed and you can put your bedding plants and tender vegetables out of doors. Don't rush it: a few hours in the daytime is enough at first, building slowly up to all day and all night, before finally planting out. You might even pin fleece over the transplanted plants for a little while, to lessen the shock.

THINGS TO DO

If you haven't got much time, just do these essential tasks...

As gooseberries start to swell, thin them out (using the small unripe ones for cooking) to allow space for the remainder to grow.

Put a net over developing strawberries to keep the birds off and put straw around their bases to lift the fruits off the ground.

This is a bad month for carrot fly. Cover sowings in fleece to keep them out.

THREE GREAT...

Plants for moths

Night-flying insects are attracted to pale, highly fragrant flowers that they can find in the dark. Fill your plot with those and you'll be making the evening garden a more attractive place for both wildlife and yourself.

Cestrum nocturnum

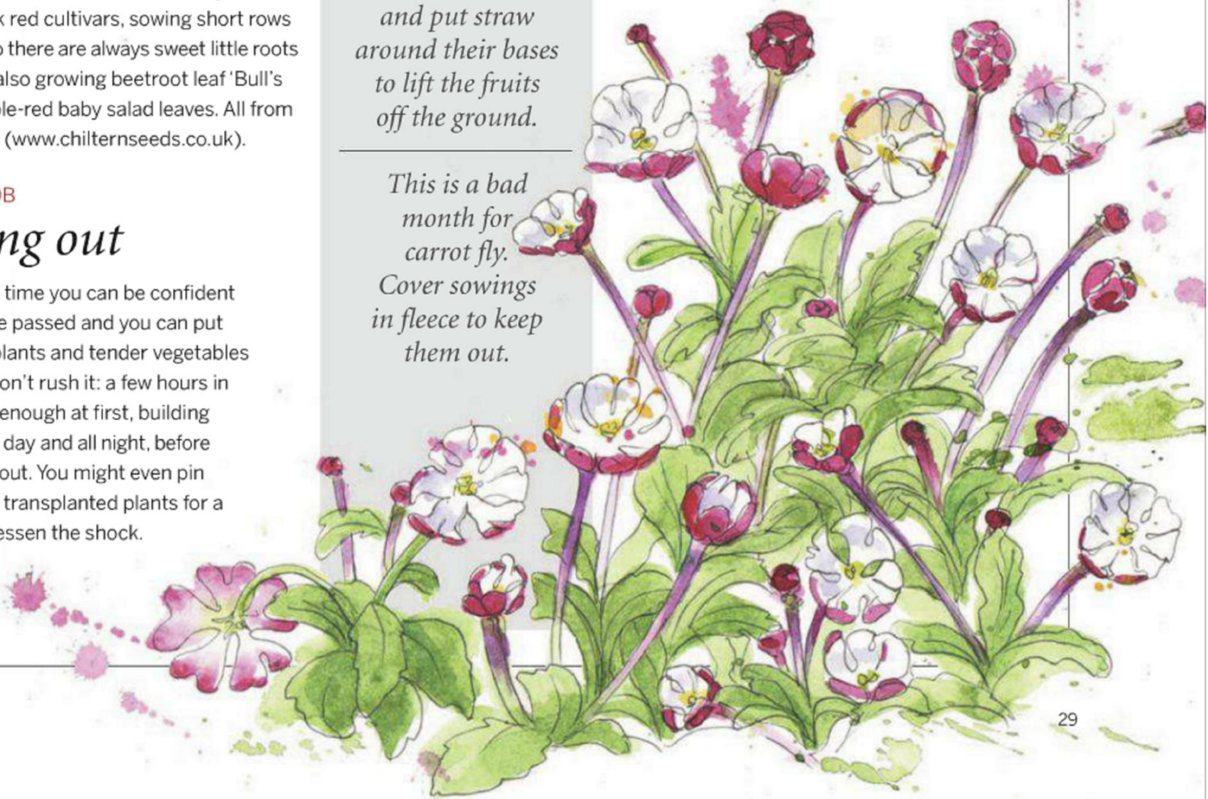
Night-blooming jasmine is a West Indian plant that must be grown as a houseplant but can be moved outside in summer. It will fill your evening garden with a spicy, tropical fragrance. It has small white or greenish-white flowers against dark leaves.

Wisteria floribunda

Most wisterias are scented but this one is particularly strong at night. It has long sweet-smelling pendant racemes of flowers.

***Zaluzianskya ovata* (night phlox)**

This tiny plant (see below) packs a huge punch. Deep pink buds open to pure white flowers on long stalks, with a sweet and spicy honey-like aroma.



READ THIS

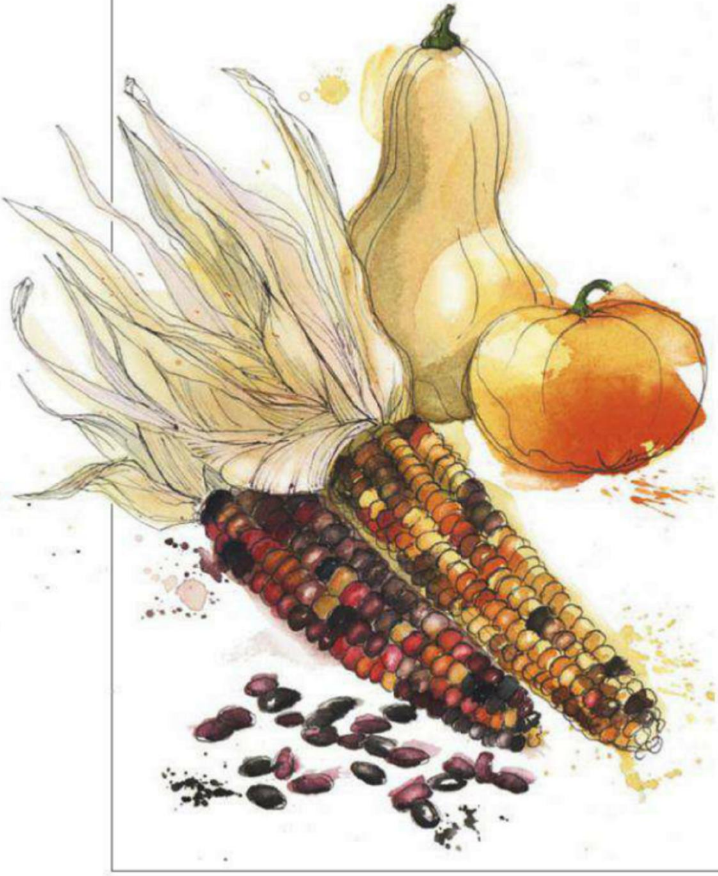
Blogging from Blackpitts

It's always a good time to read James Alexander-Sinclair's blog, but this month is a better time than most. As the grand circus that is the Chelsea Flower Show rolls into town, garden designer and RHS council member James is on hand to give us the inside story and the important details, such as which committees get the best sandwiches. Throughout the year he gives us glimpses into the nuts and bolts of garden designing, from deliveries of thousands of bulbs to be distributed around the country to the digging of great big mysterious holes. It's always funny, and the best-loved garden blog by far. www.blackpitts.co.uk/blog

PRACTICAL JOB

Grow three sisters

Some plants rub along well together, and the 'three sisters' are a great example. Corn, beans and squash were traditionally planted together by Native Americans. The corn supports the beans, the beans provide nitrogen to the soil and the squash acts as a mulch. Growing all three can make harvesting fresh beans and corn tricky (traditionally they were grown for dried corn and beans and the whole tangle harvested together) but either of the tall crops will be happier growing with squash at their feet than without. Plant out beans and squash plants and direct sow sweet corn mid-month.



ONE TO MAKE

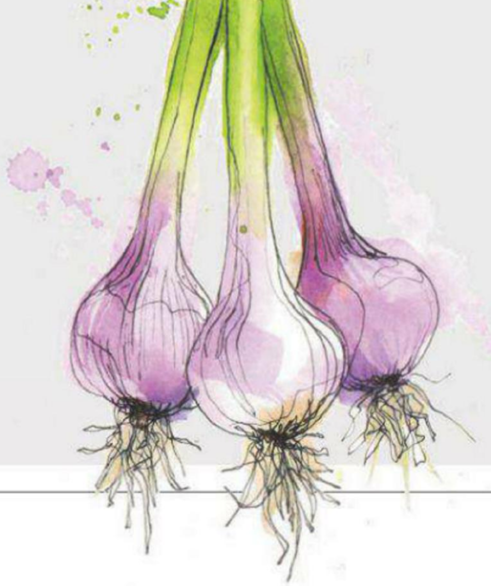
Green garlic soup

A real gardener's treat, green garlic is the same stuff you pull up in midsummer, but cropped now in May, before it has fully ripened. The result is a fresher, sweeter, milder bulb without the heat and pungency. It won't store, so use it immediately for a delicious, pale and creamy soup.

INGREDIENTS – serves 6

6-8 heads green garlic (use the bulb, which is still small, and the first, white, part of the stalk)
1 litre chicken or vegetable stock
4 small, waxy potatoes
4 tbsp single cream
handful of parsley
sea salt, pepper,
crème fraîche and chopped chives for garnish
vegetable oil for frying

Boil the potatoes until soft. Gently heat the oil, chop the heads of garlic and cook them slowly over a low heat until soft and translucent. Add the stock, cooked potatoes and parsley and whizz up in a blender. Add cream, season and garnish.



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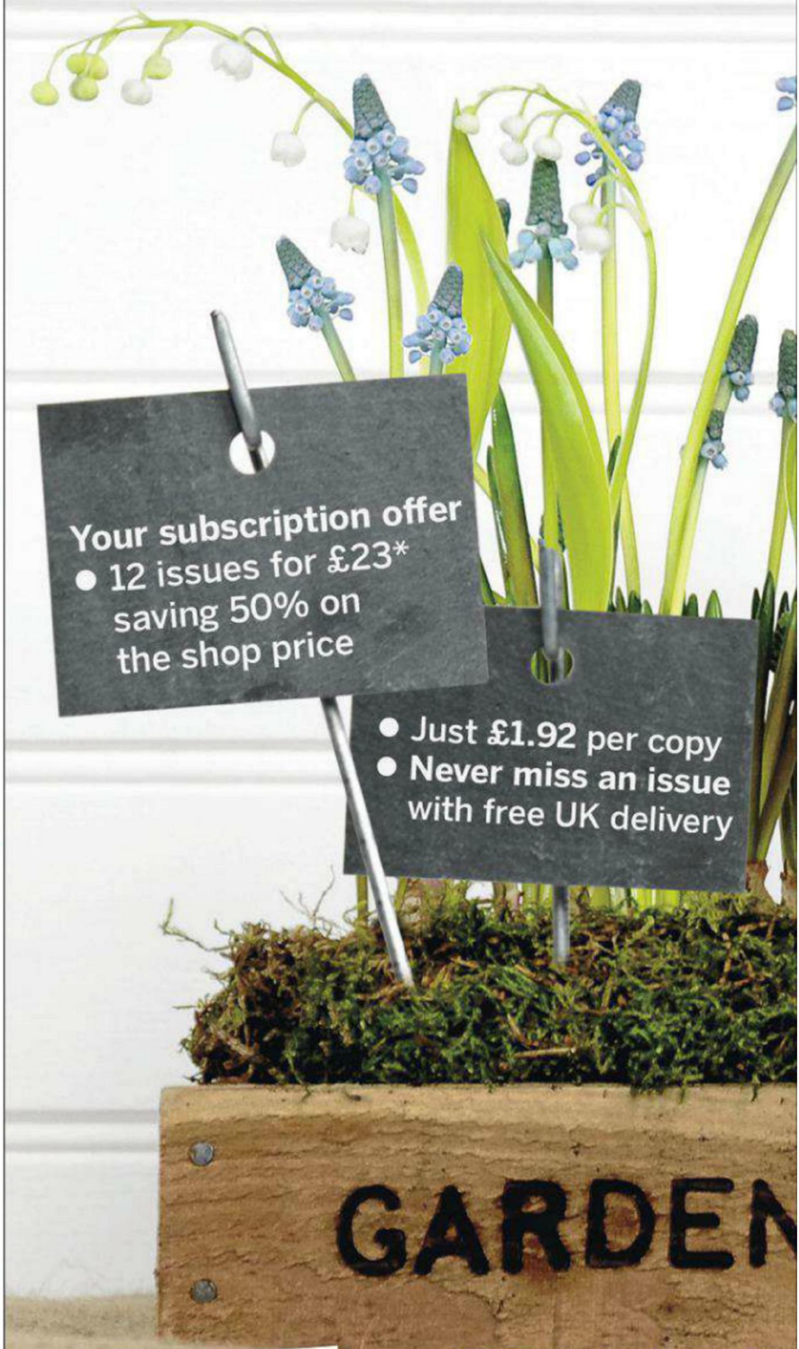
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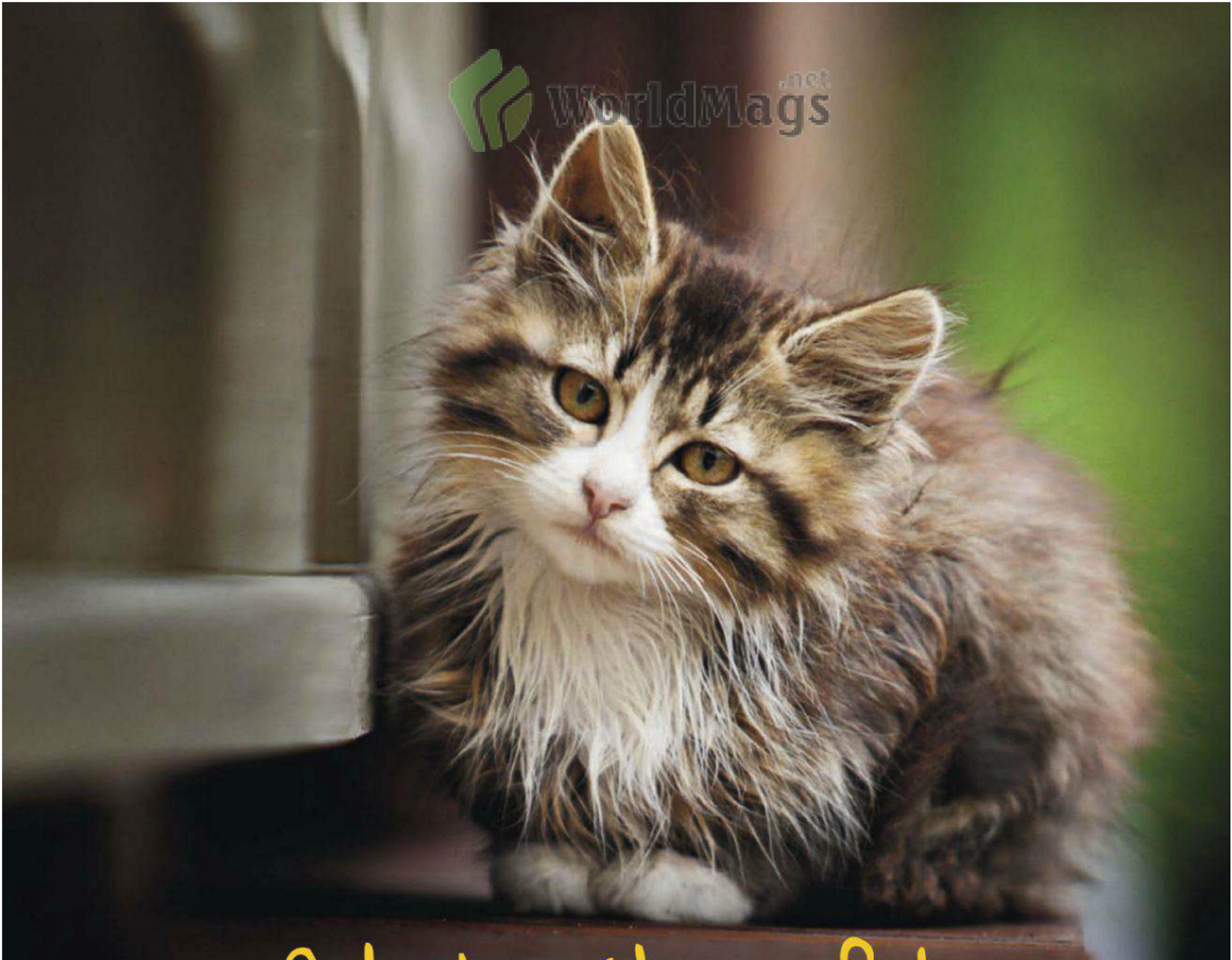

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STEVEN WOOSTER / GAP PHOTOS

Chelsea 2012 preview

May sees the highlight of Britain's gardening calendar. Here's our insider guide to the most exciting show gardens, plants, trends and shopping at the RHS 2012 Chelsea Flower Show

Contents

36 Designer profiles and show garden highlights
46 The latest design trends
50 Plants to look out for
53 Shopping at Chelsea

Chelsea Flower Show 22-26 May

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Advance purchase only. To buy or check availability, go to www.theticketfactory.com/rhs/online or call 0844 338 7505 (from outside the UK call +44 121 767 4063). RHS members enjoy discounts and priority booking. Call 0845 130 4646 or go to www.rhs.org.uk/join

CHELSEA TV COVERAGE

Starts with show previews on 20 and 21 May and continues daily with a lunchtime show on BBC One and evening show on BBC Two. See *Radio Times* for full details. See www.gardensillustrated.com for a podcast on the show's key features and trends.

Designer profiles

We highlight three of our favourites at RHS Chelsea Flower Show 2012, and look at six other strong contenders, all vying for Best in Show

WORDS **ANNIE GATTI**

CHARLIE HOPKINSON

Sarah Price on garden design

PROFILE

NAME Sarah Price
BORN Kingston-upon-Thames, 1980
TRAINING BA Hons Fine Art, Nottingham Trent University, but largely self taught
CHELSEA HISTORY Two silver medals 2007, 2008

I don't like gardens to be static. I think it's really good to celebrate the seasons, to have areas that peak and that fade into background at different times. **I respond more to natural landscapes** than I do to formal clipped gardens. I feel more energised by them. **My designs are tightly structured.** The structure might not be the first thing you pick up on, but without it they'd be a complete mess. Spatial arrangement is an essential feature that has to underpin the design. **I try to absorb lessons from the site.** If there's a beautiful tree which was hidden, say, with lots of rhododendron or berberis under it, I would say "Let's clear that away and give that tree space underneath and around it so we can appreciate its form". Each garden should have its own distinct atmosphere.

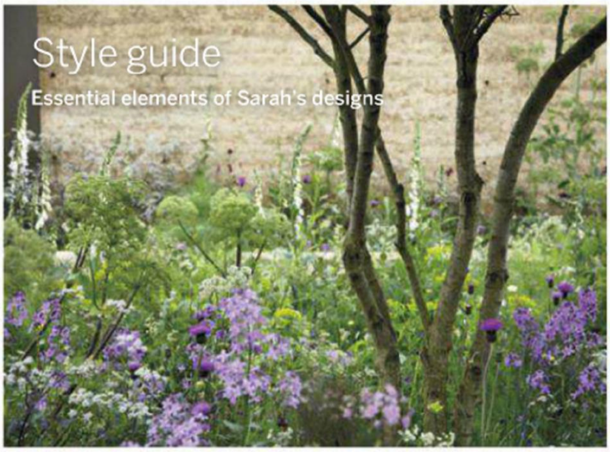
I love working with natural materials but my choice is more about their longevity. In London's Barbican, for example, the level of detailing in the concrete is absolutely beautiful and it will last for the future. I think sustainability should be a given in every design – it should underpin everything.

I don't have a garden at the moment but when I do it definitely will be planted. I think one of the most exciting things happening at the moment is seeding, whether with annual or perennial mixes. I would love to travel and experiment with different plant communities.

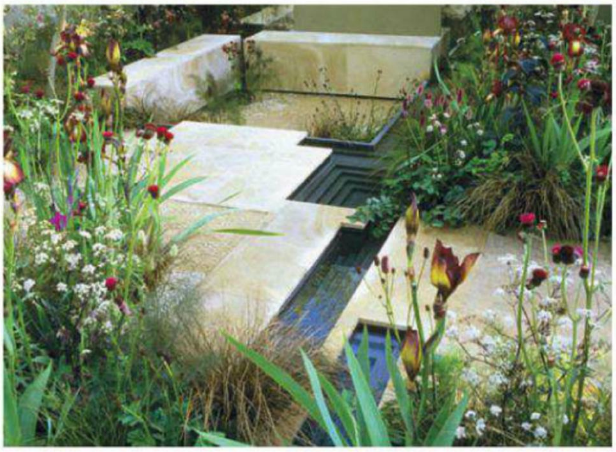
I couldn't do without spring plants like primroses, snowdrops and crocuses. Their timing is very important and they would always be in any garden that I created.

Style guide

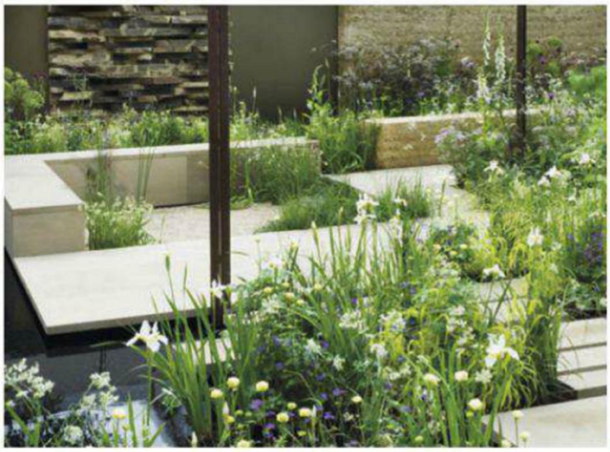
Essential elements of Sarah's designs



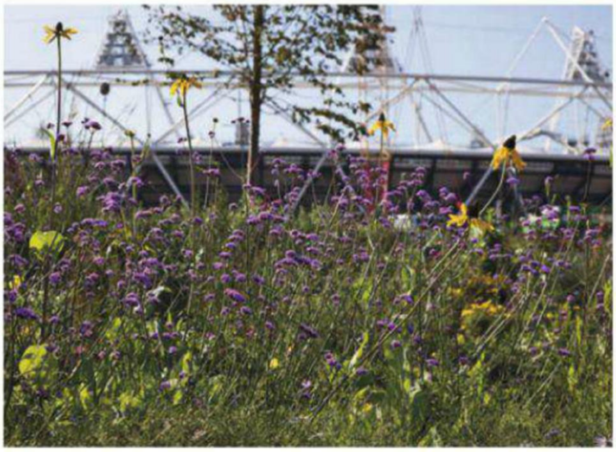
1 FLOWER AND SEED HEADS
Sarah favours different kinds of umbellifers for their height and the shape of their flower heads, which also produce interesting seed heads to lend structure to the planting later in the season.



2 STRAIGHT LINES
In her landscaping, Sarah often uses straight lines to offset the softness of her planting, as seen here in the rill and stone work of the garden she created for Chelsea in 2007 sponsored by QVC.

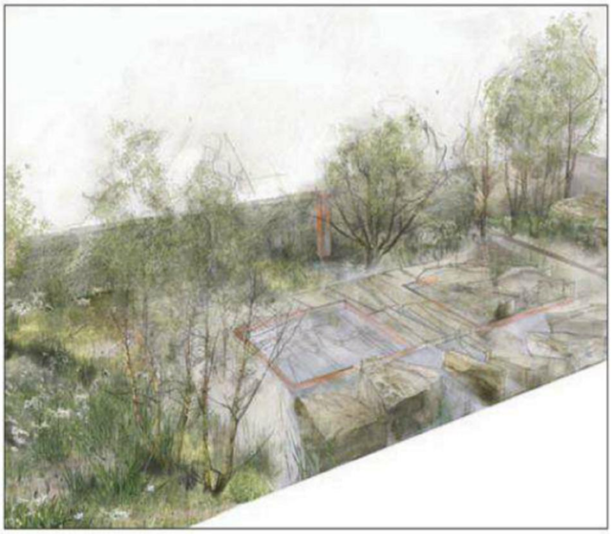


3 CONTRASTS
Textural contrasts are important to Sarah in hard landscaping as well as with the planting. Here sawn limestone is used to create two different effects, smooth and rough.



4 LAYERING AND VERTICALS
Inspired by the layered effect of natural meadows, Sarah uses plants with strong vertical form as emergents, as in this planting designed with James Hitchmough for the 2012 garden at the Olympic Park.

1-3 MARIANNE MAJERUS; 4 SARAH PRICE & JAMES HITCHMOUGH



Sarah's design for Chelsea 2011

PLOT	MA20
SPONSOR	*The Telegraph*
CONTRACTOR	Crocus
THEME	The romance of wild places in the landscape

Sarah's ambitious design for her third show garden is inspired by walks along upland streams and on limestone pavements. Linear gravel paths lead through meadow-inspired planting to a sunken central square, where water flows between pieces of sawn Chilstone limestone and is contained within two copper-framed square pools. At the rear of the garden a glade of tall multi-stemmed birch trees frames the scene and large boulders provide improvised seats. Copper detailing picks up the patina in the natural rock faces. The planting is green, silver and white, with accents of other colours from smaller meadow species.

CONTACT 020 7703 3973, www.sarahpricelandscapes.com

"It is about creating an atmosphere: you take whatever you find and turn it into something else"

ALLAN POLLOK-MORRIS

Andy Sturgeon on garden design

PROFILE

NAME Andy Sturgeon
BORN Surrey, 1965
TRAINING Dip (Landscape) MSGD, MLI
CHELSEA HISTORY 5 Gold medals and Best in Show in 2010

For me garden design is about creating an atmosphere: you take whatever you find and turn it into something else.

My starting point is about manipulation and division of space. That's the big thing for me and that's why I tend to have walls and hedges and those sorts of things. The flowers often come late in the process. I think about form and texture first.

I can go to Tokyo and spend days looking at contemporary architecture, but actually I'm much more comfortable in natural landscapes. When I was younger I did all sorts of outdoor things, such as climbing mountains. Nature was why I got into gardening in the first place. This Chelsea garden has cow parsley and things like that, which are straight from my childhood.

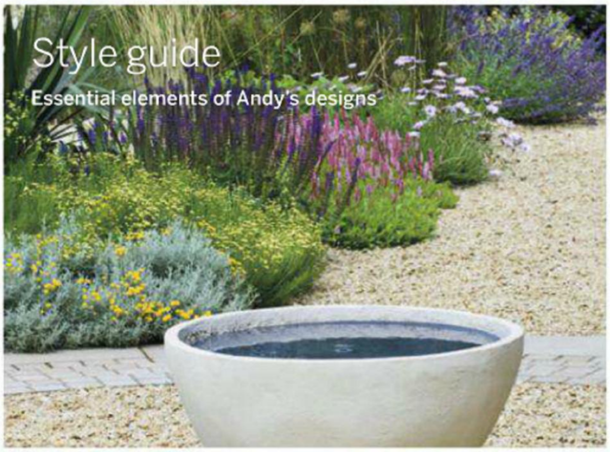
I have become increasingly interested in garden history – you can learn a lot from the past. I see what I'm doing as making contemporary gardens but not necessarily modern ones. I'm not trying to be cutting edge; I'm trying to cherry pick the best from the past.

I used to use my own garden for experimentation but it's so desperately dry and shady and full of snails that now I have made it low maintenance and it's all about greenery. I would love to create a pond in it, mostly for the wildlife.

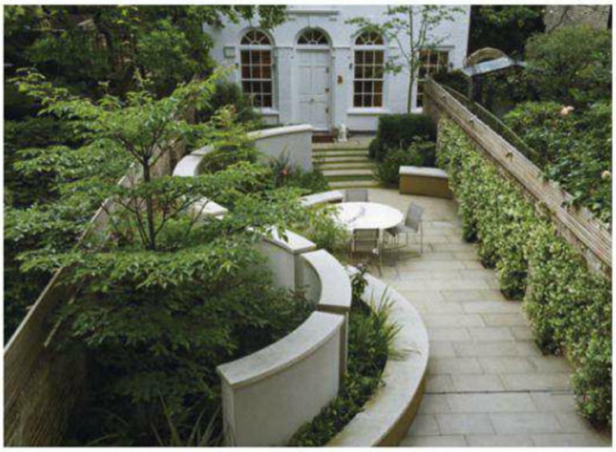
I don't do minimal gardens: plants have always played an important role in my designs. I use them to soften the architectural and sculptural features. Sculpture is not an add-on in my gardens. More often than not, we [his team] design the sculpture ourselves.

Style guide

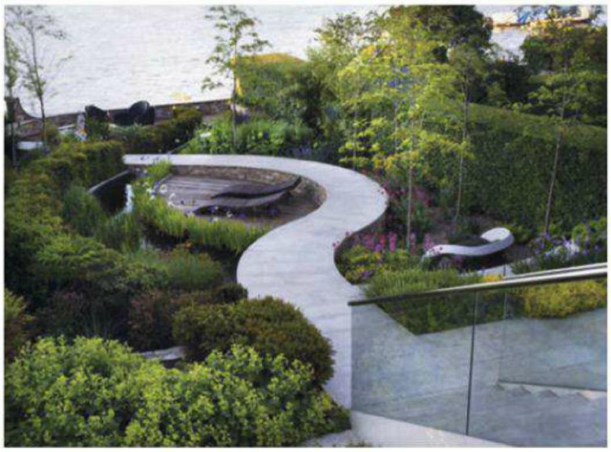
Essential elements of Andy's designs



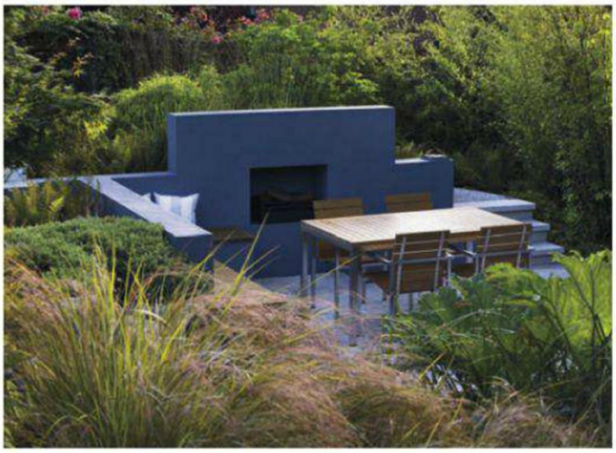
1 SCULPTURAL ELEMENTS
Andy often uses sculptural elements, such as a single, bespoke container, either filled with water or left empty, as focal points in many of his gardens.



2 BUILDING WALLS
Rendered walls, used both to divide spaces and provide vertical structure, bring a contemporary feel to Andy's designs.

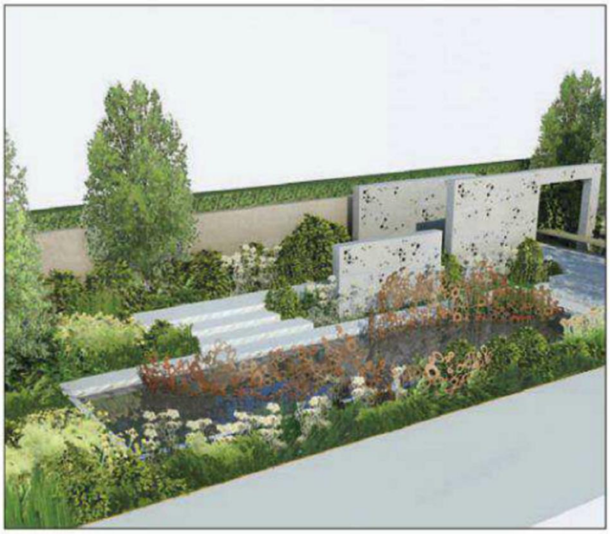


3 STRONG LINES
Yew hedging is used in this rectangular riverside garden to create a sinuous backbone to the sloping garden, in counterpoint to the stone-capped wall.



4 TEXTURAL CONTRASTS
Textural contrast in plants interests Andy just as much as colour, as seen in this private garden for owners who requested a Japanese feel.

1,3 & 4 HELEN FICKLING; 2 JERRY HARPUR



Andy's design for Chelsea 2012

PLOT	MA18
SPONSOR	M&G Investments
CONTRACTOR	Creative Landscapes Co
THEME	Garden inspired by the Arts & Crafts movement

Borrowing elements from the Arts and Crafts movement, which celebrated craftsmanship and local materials and shunned mass production, Andy uses a trio of walls, punctured with circles to suggest the woodcut wallpaper patterns of William Morris, to break up the linear design and to frame a limestone terrace. The planting that surrounds the formal pool is predominantly green threaded through with cream, white, yellow, blue and dark purple flowers. The central sculpture, panels of interconnecting copper rings, winds through the planting and the water as a graceful counterpoint to the strong verticals of the walls.

CONTACT 01273 553336, www.andysturgeon.com

> *"Gardening is about sharing and I always come away richer from having shared it"*

BRITT WILLOUGHBY DYER

Arne Maynard on garden design

PROFILE

NAME Arne Maynard
BORN Bietigheim, Germany, 1963
TRAINING Self-taught, with a lifetime's gardening experience
CHELSEA HISTORY Gold Medal and Best in Show, 2000, for garden designed in collaboration with Piet Oudolf

I like to do a show garden the way I do real gardens. We never put big structures in them. Structure is provided by the plants, by hedges and clipped shapes. **You can't put in things that look alien** but in the majority of the gardens I design I use planted architecture to create surprise and discovery, to capture views, to create divisions and subdivisions.

I like the training and manipulation of plants, that's the true art of gardening. I love the contrast between clipped and unclipped, natural and formal.

Copper beech hedges have become a bit of a signature element for me. They give a lovely richness of colour and look amazing in winter. I want gardens to have longevity, to work all year round.

There is something magical about being able to step into a border and pick a bunch of flowers to bring in to the house, so I include plenty of flowers for cutting.

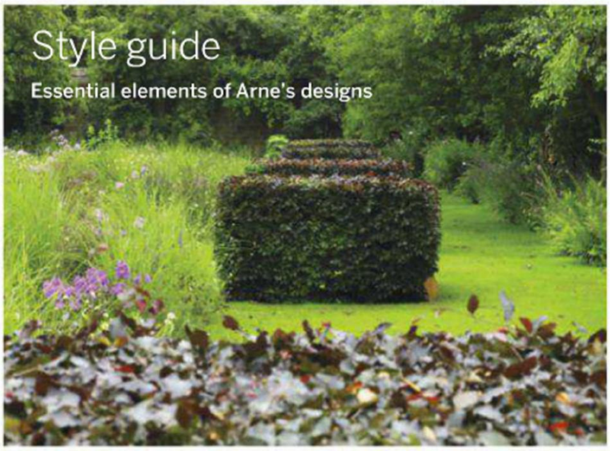
When you're creating a garden and have a vision for it that includes, say, a dining table and if you can't find what you want anywhere, it's easier and more exciting to design your own. The furniture I design has clean lines: you don't want it to detract from the planting.

I couldn't do without *Daphne odora*. It has the most amazing perfume, gives evergreen structure and you can even grow it in a pot.

I have had my garden in Wales for five years, creating a sanctuary, blending nature with formality. It's my treasure box. I think gardening is about sharing and I always come away richer from having shared it. I always encourage clients to open their gardens.

Style guide

Essential elements of Arne's designs



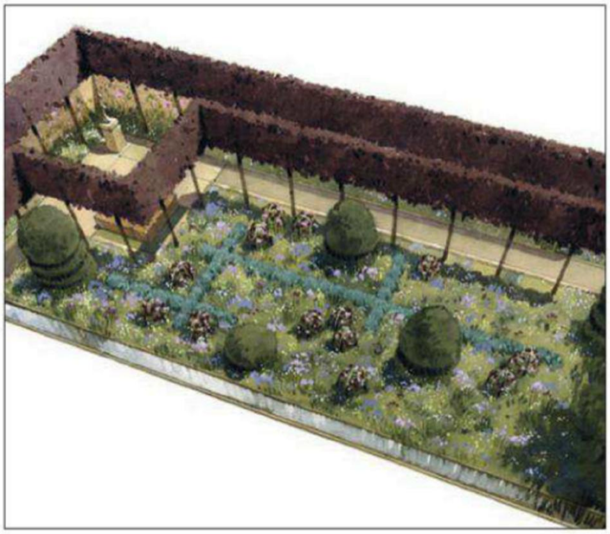
1 USING COPPER BEECH
Copper beech is one of Arne's favourite plants both for the richness of its colour and for its year-round interest. Here it is used sculpturally, alongside naturalistic planting.

2 CREATING VIEWS
Creating views within a garden is central to Arne's style. In this garden, a clipped hedge establishes a division between two areas and frames the view through to the next part.

3 ALL ABOUT THE DETAIL
Attention to detail is central to Arne's approach. Here the design of the finials on the gate is taken from spindles inside the house. Espaliered pear trees frame a grassy courtyard beyond.

4 NATURAL MATERIALS
Arne favours natural materials, such as using hazel supports for roses. Their architectural shapes provide structure in the borders throughout winter and spring.

1 WILLIAM COLLINSON; 2 ROWAN ISAAC; 3 & 4 BRITT WILLOUGHBY DYER

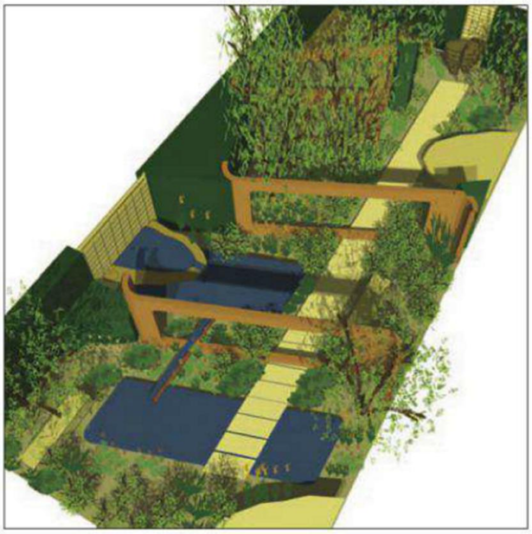


Arne's design for Chelsea 2012

PLOT	MA19
SPONSOR	Laurent-Perrier
CONTRACTOR	Crocus
THEME	The gardener's garden

Hard landscaping is kept to a minimum in this plant-rich design by Arne Maynard who returns to the Main Avenue at Chelsea after 12 years. "I wanted to make this garden one that people can draw ideas from," says Arne. A pleached copper beech hedge creates enclosure for the square limestone terrace accessed on two sides by a pebble mosaic path which provides a different texture underfoot. The large border – filled with a luxuriant mix of pinks and clarets from roses trained over hazel domes, perennials such as opium poppies and *Dianthus superbus* – is anchored by pieces of mature box topiary.

CONTACT 020 7689 8100, www.arnemaynard.com

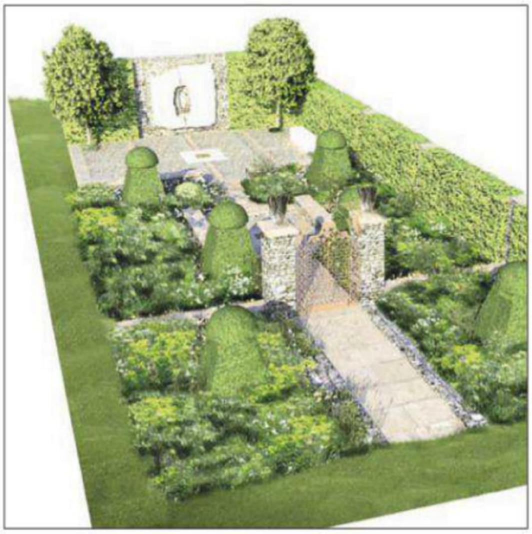


Joe Swift

PLOT	MA16
SPONSOR	Homebase
CONTRACTOR	Willerby Landscapes
THEME	Urban oasis

In Joe Swift's first show garden the warm tones of sandstone – used for the central path and for three sawn boulders and two wall features – are complemented by a planting palette of oranges, yellow and burgundy from plants that can tolerate dry conditions such as grevilleas, geums and euphorbias. Two pairs of cedar frames, set diagonally, draw the eye across the garden to the gravel courtyard at the back, in the shade of a London plane. In the front section water flows over a boulder into two pools with curved edges that mirror the curves of the cedar frames.

CONTACT 020 7253 1222, www.joeswift.co.uk

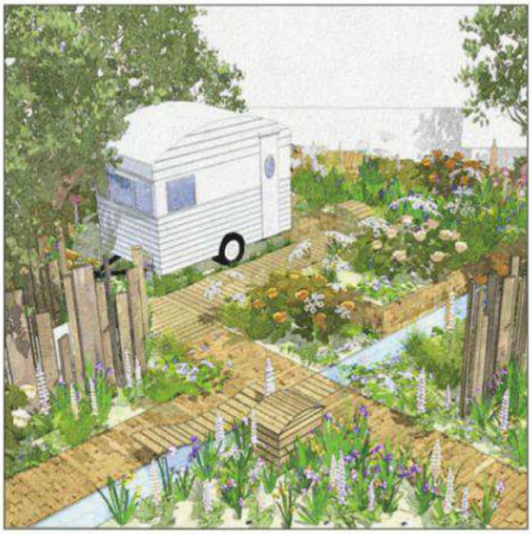


Cleve West

PLOT	MA15
SPONSOR	Brewin Dolphin
CONTRACTOR	Steve Swatton
THEME	Traditional with a hint of contemporary

Clipped beech hedging, limestone paving, setts and walls, three pairs of topiary yews and an antique iron gate set in drystone pillars topped with flame finials create the framework for Cleve West's formal design. The striking topiary shapes, which lead the eye down the garden to the stone wall sculpture at the end – a 260-year-old well head set vertically – vary in height, breaking the formality of the scheme. Perennial planting is predominantly white and lime green with a selection of purples and reds and, an experiment for Cleve, there are plans to use a selection of annuals.

CONTACT 020 8977 3522, www.clevewest.com



Jo Thompson

PLOT	MA6
SPONSOR	The Caravan Club
CONTRACTOR	The Outdoor Room
THEME	Contemporary cottage garden

An unashamedly traditional cottage garden plant choice, in shades of pink, blue and white with splashes of bright yellow, creates the very British floral setting for Jo Thompson's vintage aluminium caravan, Doris. The materials, too, are native: sandstone paths and oak used to build decking, bridge, posts and seats. Vertical interest is created by a ring of *Betula albosinensis* 'Fascination', with bark that peels to cream, orange and pink, and groupings of oak posts that serve as partial screens. A steel rill, decorated with diamond detailing borrowed from the caravan's bodywork, and the cruciform framework of the design brings a contemporary underpinning to the garden.

CONTACT 01202 377132, www.jothompson-garden-design.co.uk

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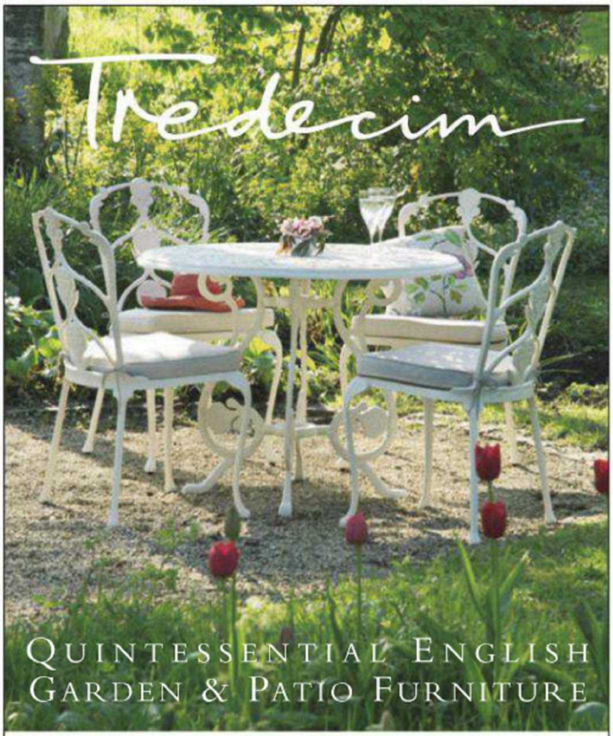

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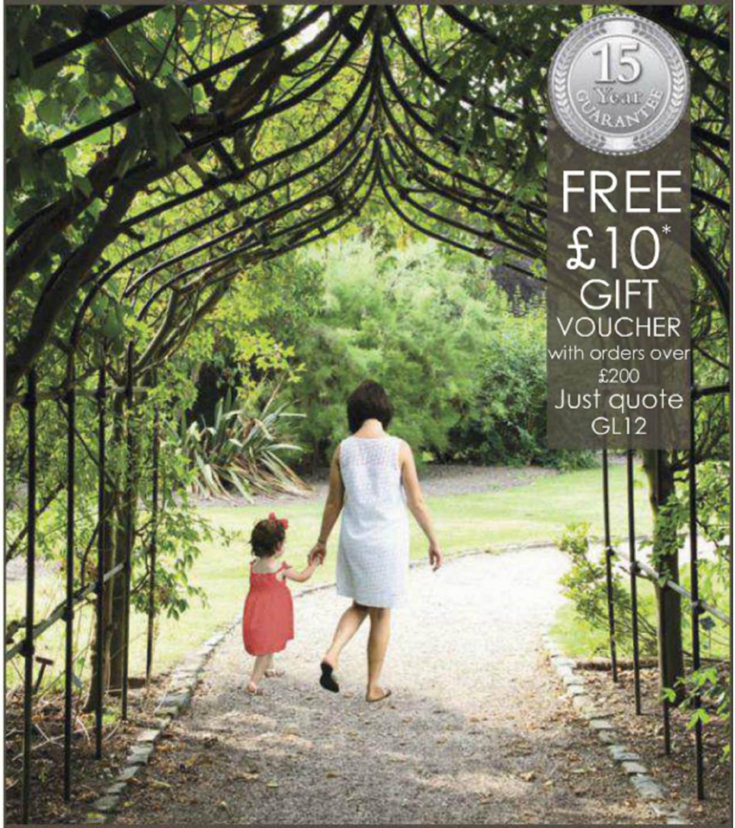

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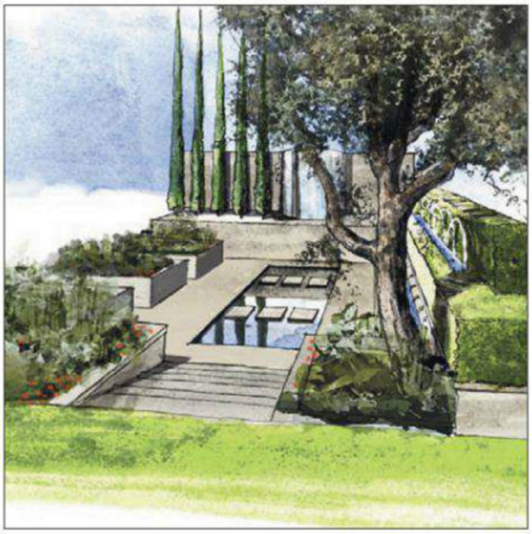
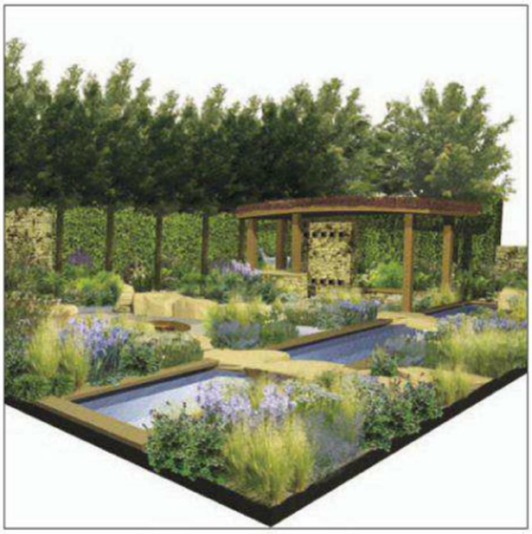


Thomas Hoblyn

PLOT	MA17
SPONSOR	Arthritis Research UK
CONTRACTOR	Bowles & Wyer Contracts
THEME	Contemporary water garden, inspired by Italy

Drawing inspiration from the Renaissance gardens at Villa Lante and Villa d'Este, Thomas Hoblyn explores the idea of controlling nature, and in particular water, with three kinds of water feature – cascade, infinity pool and 30-jet fountain – created with leading water expert Andrew Ewing. A line of soaring *Cupressus sempervirens* create a strong, vertical backdrop while the planting in the raised beds is soft and mainly green with *Papaver rhoeas* and *Nasturtium* 'Red Emperor' (launched for the first time at Chelsea) providing accents of scarlet. A mature *Quercus suber* creates a rugged frame on one side of the wide, travertine steps at the entrance to the garden.

CONTACT 01359 252056, www.thomashoblyn.com

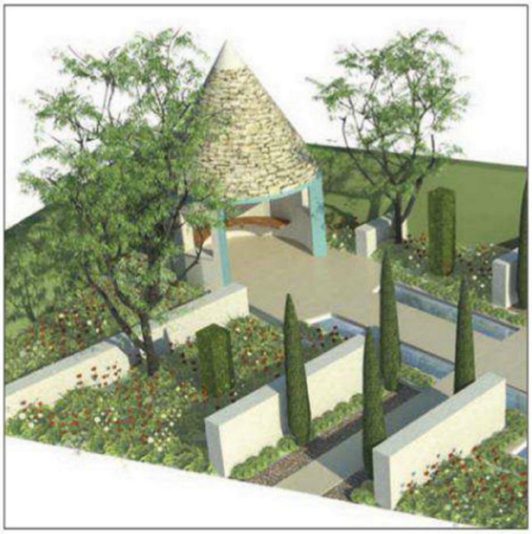


Adam Frost

PLOT	MA4
SPONSOR	Lands' End UK
CONTRACTOR	New Ground Landscapes
THEME	Garden with rural feel for 'green' owners

The fenland landscape of 19th-century poet and green campaigner John Clare was the starting point for this design which makes strong use of limestone from the area: as boulders to sit on and step across, as drystone walls, sawn paving and as gravel on the self-binding paths. A rectilinear watercourse, fed at one end by a gentle chute, is bordered with familiar herbaceous species including geraniums and aquilegias. The path leading to an oak-framed shelter, with a clover roof, is lined with hornbeams that suggest a woodland edge while *Acer campestre* hedges provide a native frame for the whole garden.

CONTACT 01572 812186, www.adamfrost.co.uk



Nigel Dunnett

PLOT	MA13
SPONSOR	Royal Bank of Canada
CONTRACTOR	Landform Consultants
THEME	Artful rainwater garden

Nigel Dunnett has swapped last year's informal rainwater garden, with its shipping container pavilion, for a design inspired by the formal layouts of paradise gardens and by the landscape and buildings of the Puglia region in Italy. Rainwater drains from the sloping meadows, vibrant with hundreds of maroon *Lilium martagon* flowers, into the central, linear bioswale drainage courses where thalictrums and *Iris latifolia* emerge along the edges. Structure is provided by clipped hornbeam columns in the meadows and a line of Italian cypresses along the central axis, providing interest all-year round. *Zelkova* trees, chosen for their form, frame the stone-roofed shelter, modelled on shepherds' huts from Puglia.

CONTACT 0114 222 0611, www.nigeldunnett.info

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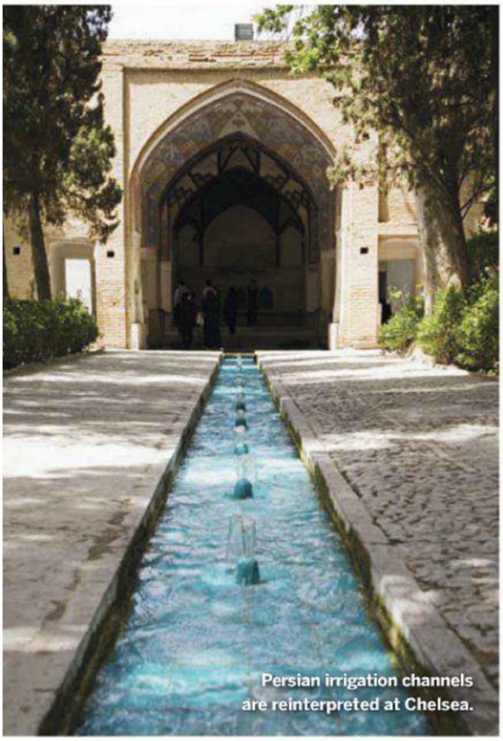
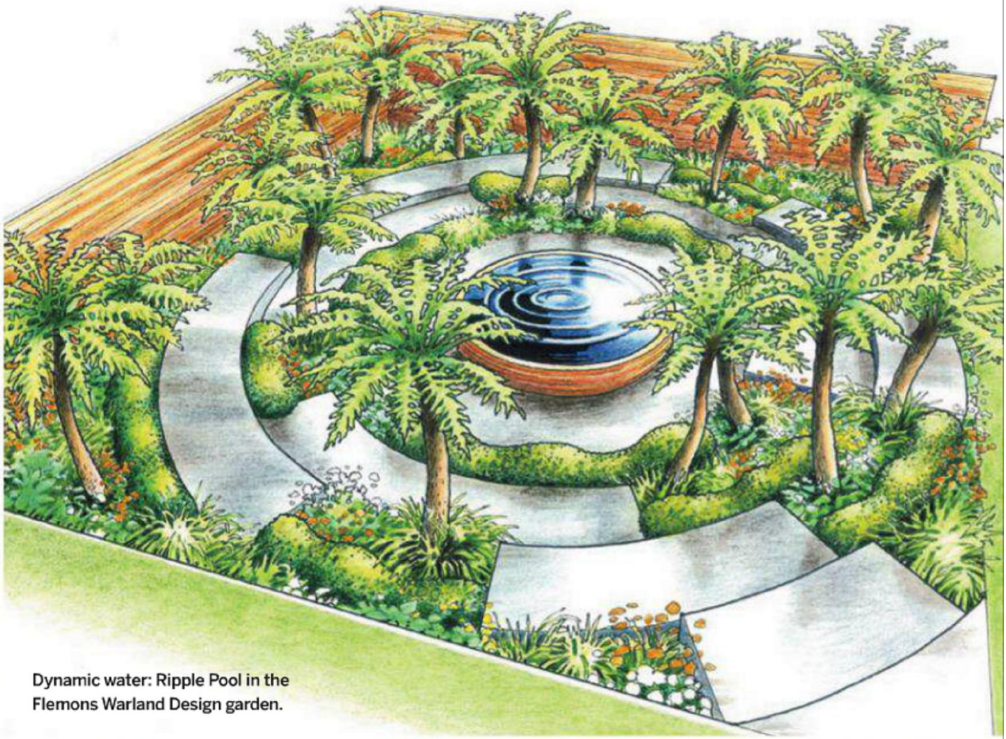
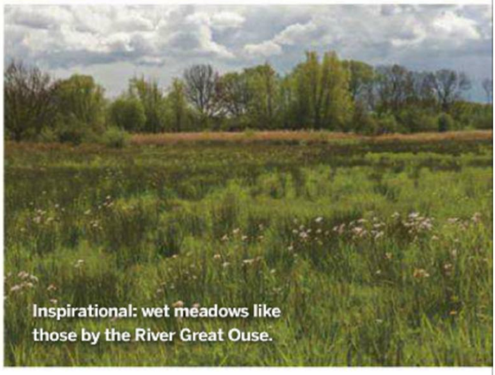


Persian irrigation channels are reinterpreted at Chelsea.



Dynamic water: Ripple Pool in the Flemons Warland Design garden.

Influential: the dry meadows of the East European Steppes.



Inspirational: wet meadows like those by the River Great Ouse.

Chelsea trends

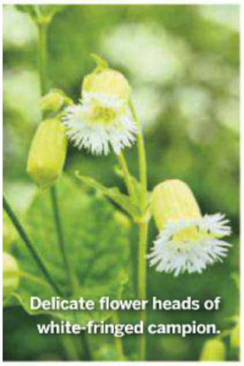
It's a showcase for the latest in planting and design, with ideas that often influence what we do in our own gardens. So what will we be taking away from this year's show, asks Annie Gatti?

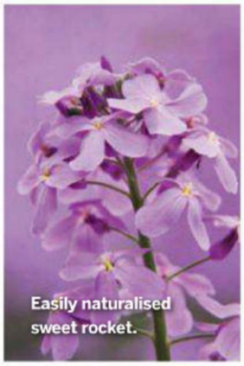
For inspiration at Chelsea, designers are looking back to traditional country gardens and craftsmanship, or out to the plant communities found in natural landscapes. These two themes are strong in show gardens large and small this year.

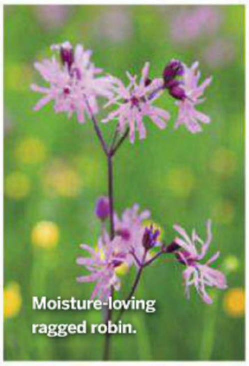
Garden buildings are strangely absent and water, in a year when drought is high on every gardener's agenda, is generously present. In some cases it is there to show us how it can be harvested. Nigel Dunnett presents the modern rainwater system in a stylish network of formal rills while Nick Dexter reinterprets Persian irrigation channels. Tomaz Bavdez has devised a quirky design for filtering grey water in the new Fresh Gardens category. In others, water is celebrated for its dynamic qualities, including Tom Hoblyn's spouts and chute and the Ripple Pool by John Warland and Sim Flemons. Sarah Price's flowing stream evokes natural watercourses while Adam Frost's fen dykes demonstrate its still reflective effect.

Natural stone is presented in several different forms within gardens, ranging from walls, boulders and stepping stones to paving and gravel. Oak is the chosen material for benches on three main

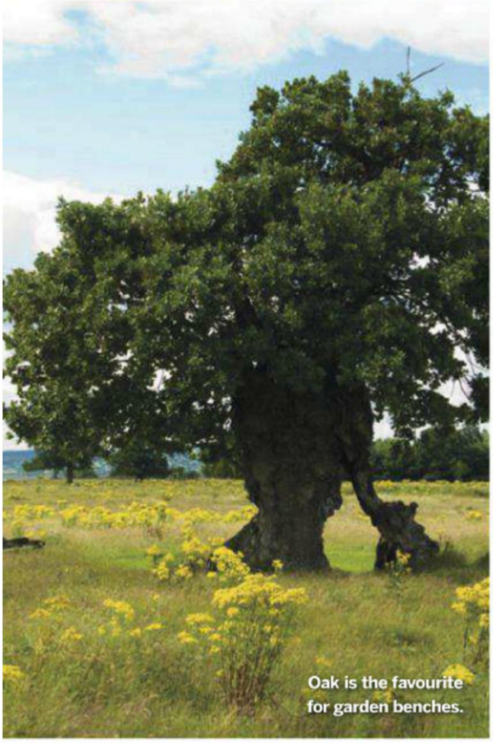
JANE SEBIRE; ALEXEY SOLODOV / ALAMY; CHRIS GOMERSALL / ALAMY


Delicate flower heads of white-fringed campion.


Easily naturalised sweet rocket.


Moisture-loving ragged robin.

Mediterranean planting: Italian cypresses.


Oak is the favourite for garden benches.

Jo Thompson's Caravan Club garden takes a nostalgic look at British holidays.

gardens including Jo Thompson's Caravan Club design where it also provides vertical structures, as does cedar in Joe Swift's garden for Homebase.

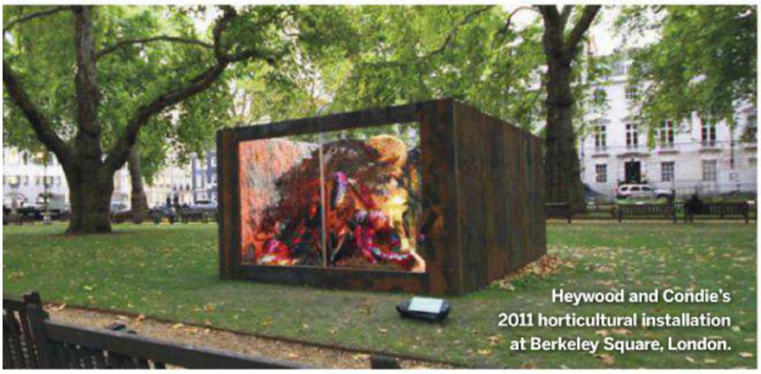
Planting is generally loose in effect, with topiary used in several gardens to create a formal overlay. Many designers have looked to dry meadows for their planting palettes, whether in the UK, Italy, Slovenia or on the East European Steppes. Wet meadows and boggy areas inspire Sarah Price's design and several of the Artisan gardens. Delicate flowerheads, such as white-fringed campion (*Silene fimbriata*) ragged robin (*Lychnis flos-cuculi*) and sweet rocket (*Hesperis matronalis*) emerge from grassy understoreys. Drought-tolerant species, such as myrtle and Italian cypress, are used in Mediterranean-inspired designs.

> *"Planting is generally loose in effect and many designers have looked to dry meadows for their planting palettes"*

The exceptions to these trends are the rooftop workplace by Patricia Fox which mixes LED screens and laptops with a herb wall and green roof; Chris Beardshaw's celebration of ericaceous plants for Furzey Gardens; and the semi-tropical back yard, complete with outdoor bath, by Jason Hodges for Trailfinders.

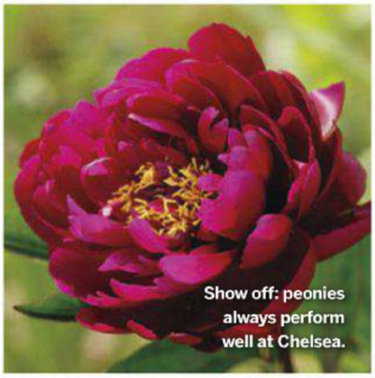
The new Fresh Gardens category encourages designers to be more experimental and to use materials in a different way. This change of direction is signposted by an installation by Tony Heywood and Alison Condie, a mixed-media extravaganza inside a steel box clad in meadow plants. Tony Smith's design for Easigrass, a study on envy in the plant world, is an arresting construction of perspex rods capped with artificial grass enclosing red cylinders filled with silk orchids. Perspex features as a sculptural element in Caroline E Butler's design for Bradstone and as transparent screens and boundary walls in Chris Gutteridge's garden for Rainbows Hospice for Children. Even in ▷

MARK BOLTON / GAP PHOTOS; JASON INGRAM; VAL DUNCAN / KENEBEC IMAGES / ALAMY; REAL IMAGE / ALAMY; JEFF GILBERT / ALAMY



Heywood and Condie's 2011 horticultural installation at Berkeley Square, London.

May favourites: irises are regularly included in show gardens.



Show off: peonies always perform well at Chelsea.

JASON INGRAM; JO WHITWORTH / GAP

▷ this category, though, the preferred planting style is naturalistic. This is a trend observed by Chris Marchant of Orchard Dene Nurseries, a supplier of show gardens at Chelsea for more than 20 years. With Chelsea happening so early in the horticultural year, she explains, there are only so many plants you can bring into flower.

Big nurseries such as Crocus are able to hold back plants for two weeks and bring them forward by up to a month. But more than that and the plants fall to pieces, says Mark Straver who has recently set up his own wholesale nursery. This is why species that are naturally in flower and have the classiness that Chelsea requires, such as peonies and irises, have always been used. Chris Marchant steers designers away from plants with short flowering times, with a floppy habit, or species such as *Smyrnium perfoliatum* that hate being potted up.

Some designers, including Nigel Dunnett and Sarah Price, mainly find their Chelsea planting inspiration from natural landscapes while others like to visit nurseries or find new plants in the show's Grand Pavilion. But whatever they choose, the practical considerations are crucial. "Those special little plants are seldom around in quantity and seldom in the sizes designers need," says Chris Marchant. Like Chelsea veterans Mark Straver, Rosy Hardy of Hardy's Cottage Garden Plants or Marina Christopher of Phoenix Perennials, Chris is there to guide the designers as to what will work.

"Re-using plants, if they're grown really well and used in a way that complements other plants, is not a problem," says Mark Straver. "But if you have a star plant that gets lots of media attention, such as *Dianthus cruentus* last year, then I think it is probably unwise to feature it the next year." □

Not to miss

Danish chic for sunny days: the Diamond series of outdoor furniture using sling fabric on aluminium frames and metal tables with removable trays, available in charcoal grey and white, from debut Chelsea exhibitors **Cane-line, EA64.**

The white 'green' roof, planted with predominantly white wild flowers, at **Sky's the Limit, RHW 37.**

Floating tables of moss and skinny columns of box in the **Humko Garden, FR5.**

Keeping their cool exhibit by the University of Reading displaying French windows and a terrace with different shaped and textured plants. See which ones work best for keeping your house cool, controlling flooding and filtering pollution. **RHS Environment, GPJ6.**

The restored shepherds' hut on wheels, centrepiece of the Plankbridge Hutmakers garden and available to buy in a range of colours with oak floor and double glazing. **Plankbridge Hutmakers Garden, SEW7.**

Mad About Meadows by Capel Manor College showing how to grow your own pictorial meadow just as glorious as Nigel Dunnett's on Main Avenue. **RHS Environment, GPJ8.**

Fruit training close-up, with suggestions of companion plants to attract pollinating insects, in the **Grand Pavilion, Pennard Plants, GPB13.**

Designed for the contemporary garden, the sleek coated-aluminium Horizon glasshouse, with projecting pent roof and full-height glazing panels, new from **Hartley Botanic, MA13.**

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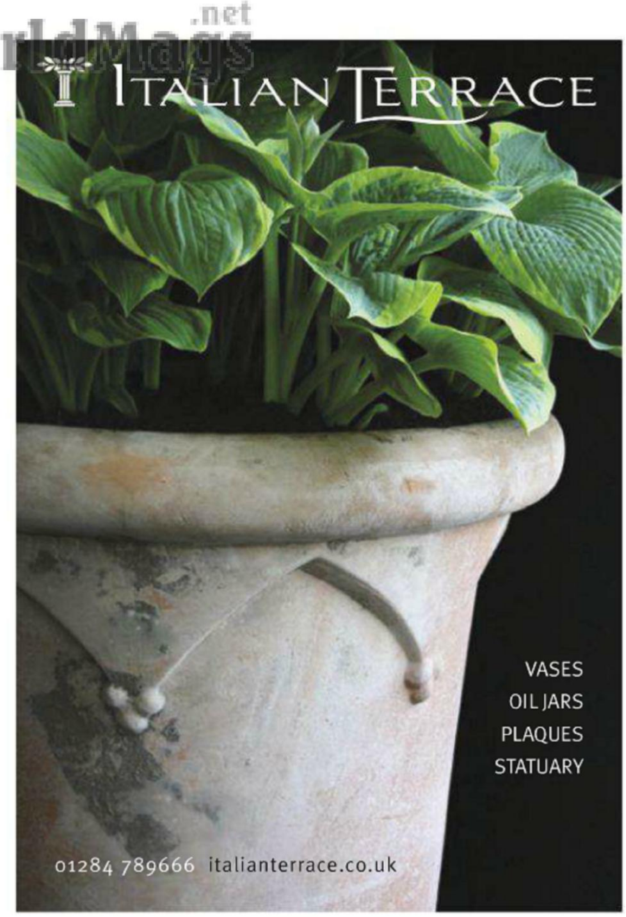

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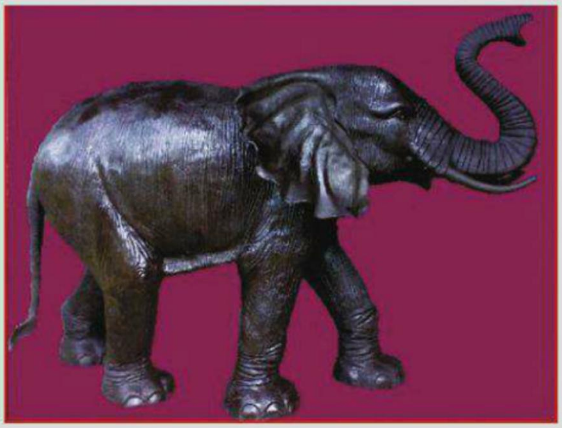

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2 Celebrating the Jubilee

Among the many commemorative plants being launched this year is The Queen's Jubilee Rose (='Beajubilee') in white and peach from Peter Beales Roses.

STAND GPD16
CONTACT www.peterbealesroses.com

3 Double the delight

Bowden Nurseries have two stands; the first features the prized collector's fern *Polystichum setiferum* 'Pulcherrimum Bevis' (pictured) – a Chelsea debut. The second stand has the new *Hosta* 'Fragrant Queen' with thick leaves and fragrant flowers.

STANDS GPC5 (Bowden Ferns) and GPC6 (Bowden Hostas)
CONTACT www.bowdenhostas.com

4 Chelsea newcomers

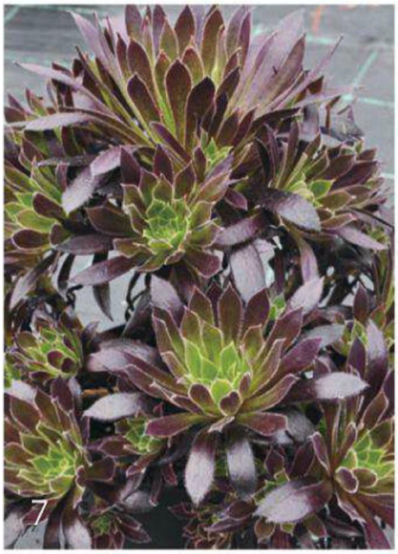
Look out for West Lothian-based Binny Plants (stand GPB14) with a display of '21st century peonies'. Meanwhile Edulis Nursery will feature edible and medicinal plants including the impressive *Cynara scolymus* (pictured) along with more unusual edibles such as wasabi and Sichuan pepper.

STAND: GPC13 **CONTACT** www.edulis.co.uk

5 Plants with purpose

Whetman Pinks will introduce *Dianthus* Memories (='WP11 Gwe04'). The ruffled flowers in white have serrated edged petals and a spicy, fruity fragrance. The Alzheimer's Society receives a donation for each plant sold.

STAND GPB14
CONTACT www.whetmanpinks.com



6 Getting close up

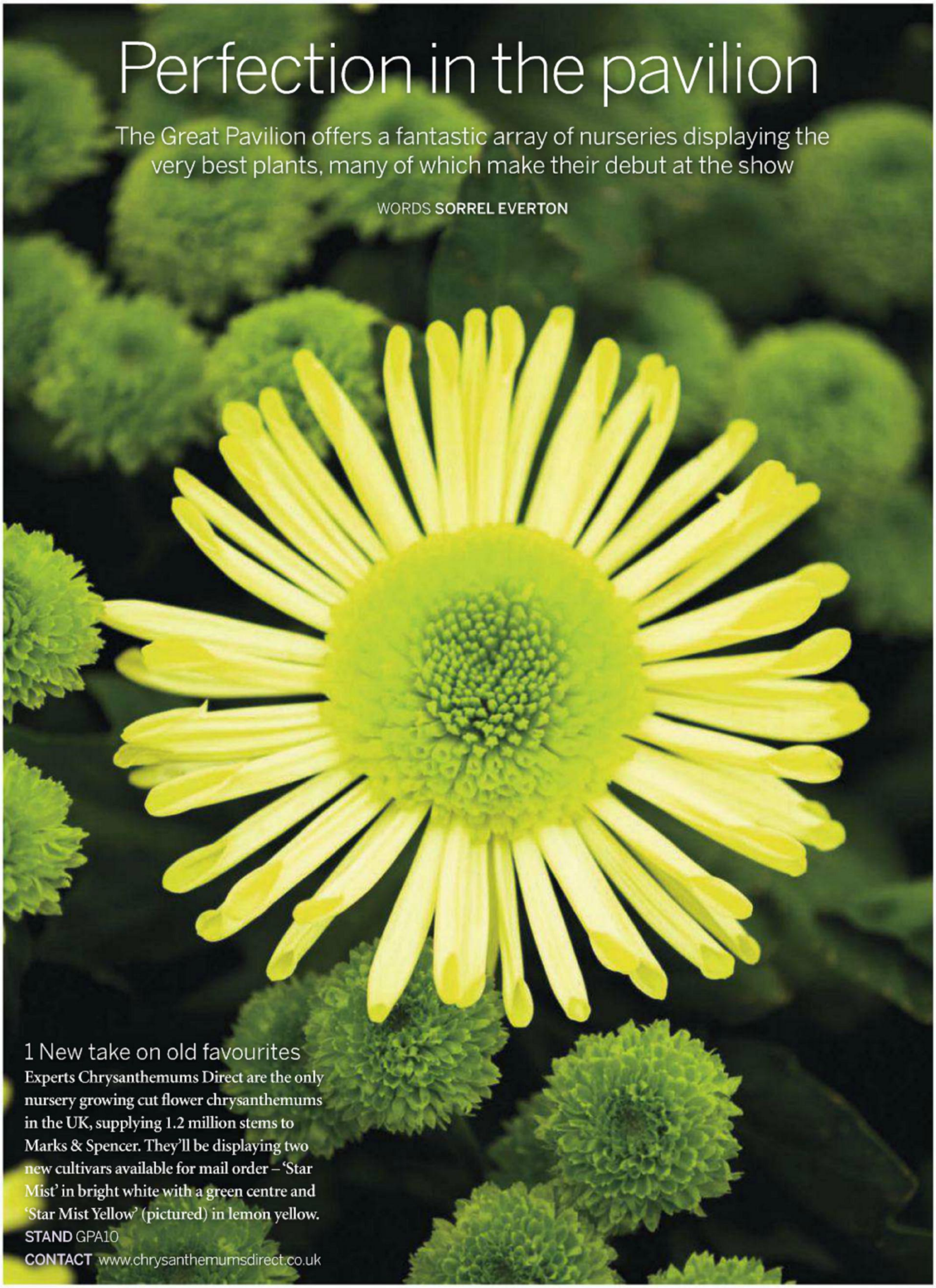
This year expert lily nursery HW Hyde & Sons is creating a walk-through stand that allows you to appreciate the scented blooms up close. New on display is *Lilium* 'Cream Tea', which produces huge, highly scented flowers in creamy white. Suitable to grow in any good soil.

STAND GPD15 **CONTACT** www.hwhyde.co.uk

7 Exotic appeal

Southern hemisphere and exotic plants specialist, Trewidden will display restios, agaves, proteas and two new aeoniums bred on the nursery; clump-forming 'Cornish Tribute' and dark-leaved 'Logan's Rock' (pictured).

STAND GPC25
CONTACT www.trewidden-online.co.uk



Perfection in the pavilion

The Great Pavilion offers a fantastic array of nurseries displaying the very best plants, many of which make their debut at the show

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1 New take on old favourites

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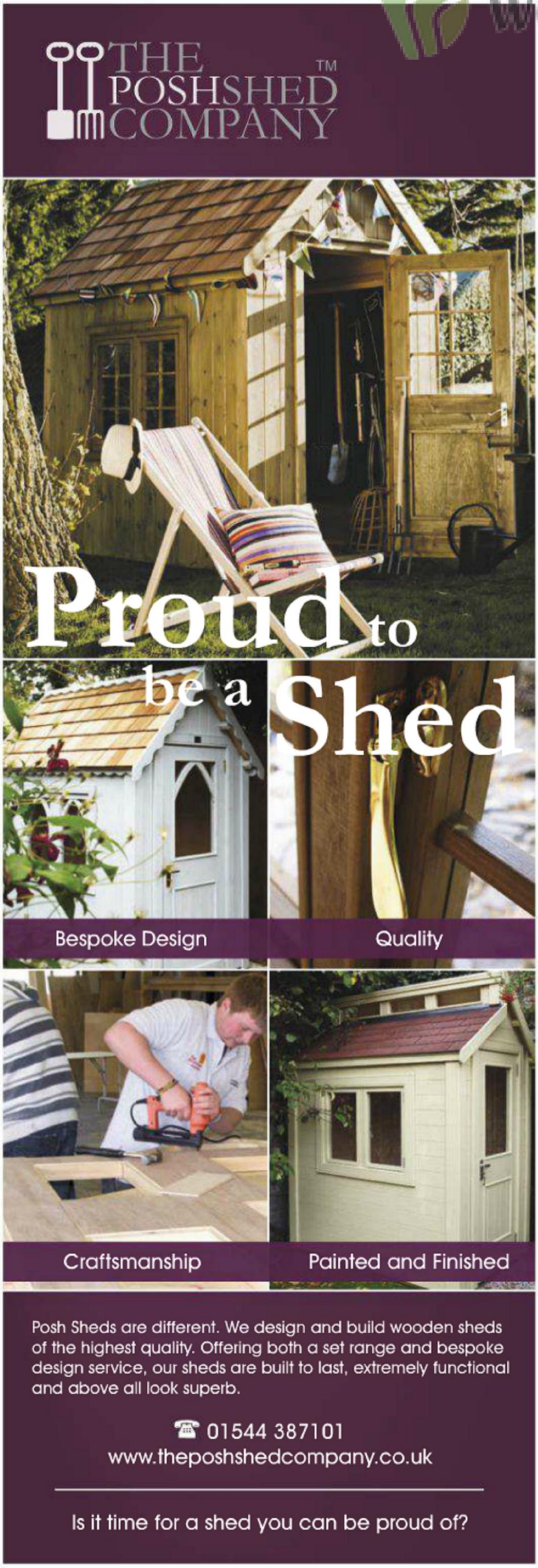
STAND GPA10

CONTACT www.chrysanthemumsdirect.co.uk

1 LEE AVISON / GAP PHOTOS; 4 MAXINE ADCOCK / GAP PHOTOS



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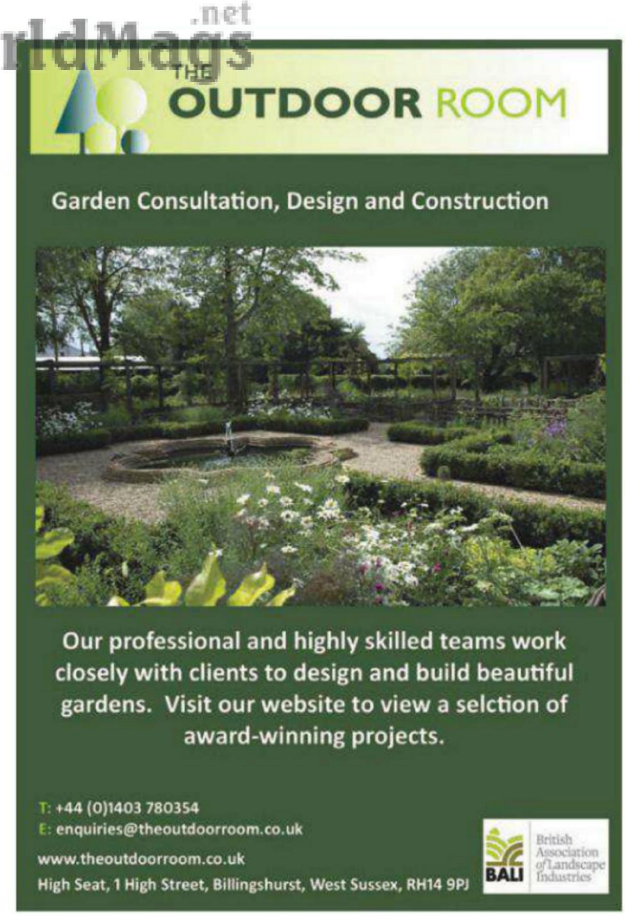

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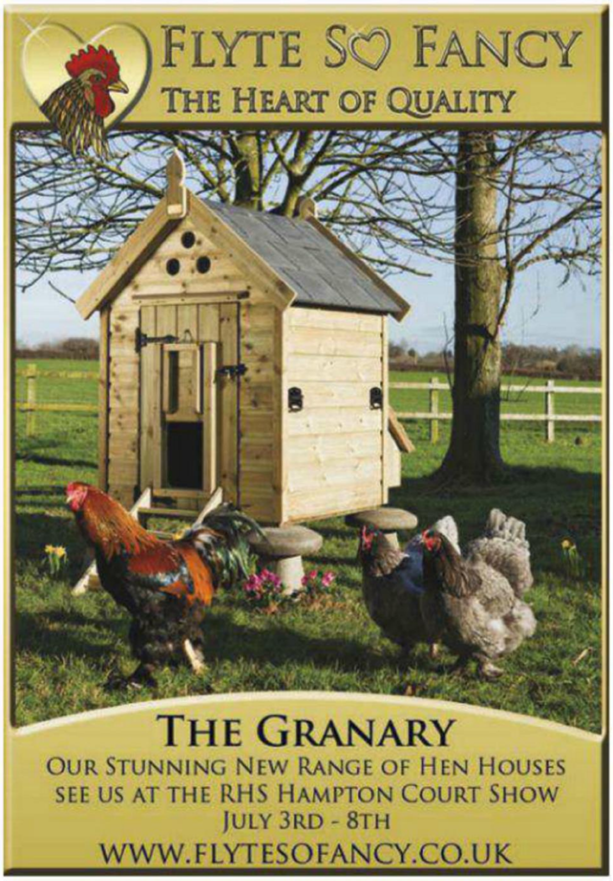

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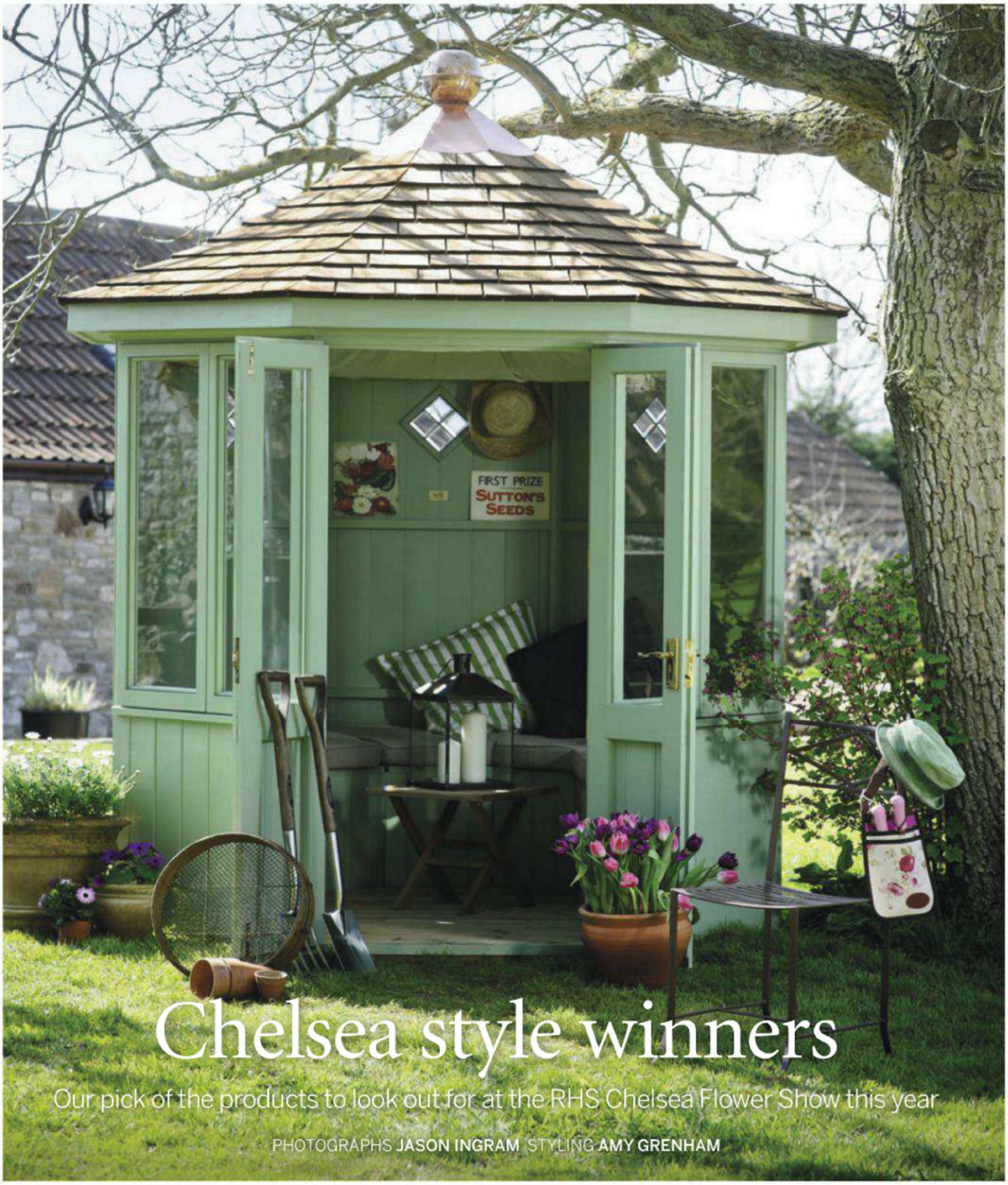

Chelsea style winners

Our pick of the products to look out for at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show this year

PHOTOGRAPHS **JASON INGRAM** STYLING **AMY GRENHAM**

1 Perfect for taking a break from a day's gardening, this '**Baltimore' summerhouse** in moorland green, comes with a cedar shingle roof and lockable doors, by Scotts of Thrapston. This model starts at £4,625 including delivery and installation, 01832 732366, www.scottsofthrapston.co.uk, or visit their Chelsea Flower Show stand, WA11. **Indoor lantern**, £34.95 by The Garden Lantern Company, 01252 852305, www.culinaryconcepts.co.uk, stand SR16. It is sitting on 'Ascot' **footstool**, £170 from Barlow Tyrie, 01376 557600, www.teak.com, stand SR11. **Cushions** from a range at Sitting Spiritually, from £39.50 plus VAT, 01297 443084, www.sittingspiritually.co.uk, stand PW9. **Straw hat**, £59 from Lands' End, 0845 0123 000, www.landsend.co.uk, stand SR26. **Vintage garden signs**, from £10, Garden & Wood, 01844 279170, www.gardenandwood.co.uk, stand EA35. **Border spade and fork** in stainless steel, both £29.49 from the traditional tool range from Spear & Jackson, 0114 281 4242, www.spear-and-jackson.com, stand EA83. **Vintage riddle**, £28 from Garden & Wood, as before. 'Varese' **chair** in russet brown, £185 from Mosaic & Stone, 01342 892792, www.mosaicandstone.co.uk, stand SR42. Green leather **sunhat**, £38 and **rose print tool carrier and tools**, £45 both from Bradleys the Tannery, 01746 766563, www.bradleysthetannery.co.uk, stand EA91.

FLOWERS BY BARRY TOOGOOD, REDLAND BRISTOL. WITH THANKS TO PETER AND KAY EVERTON FOR ALLOWING US TO PHOTOGRAPH IN THEIR GARDEN

2

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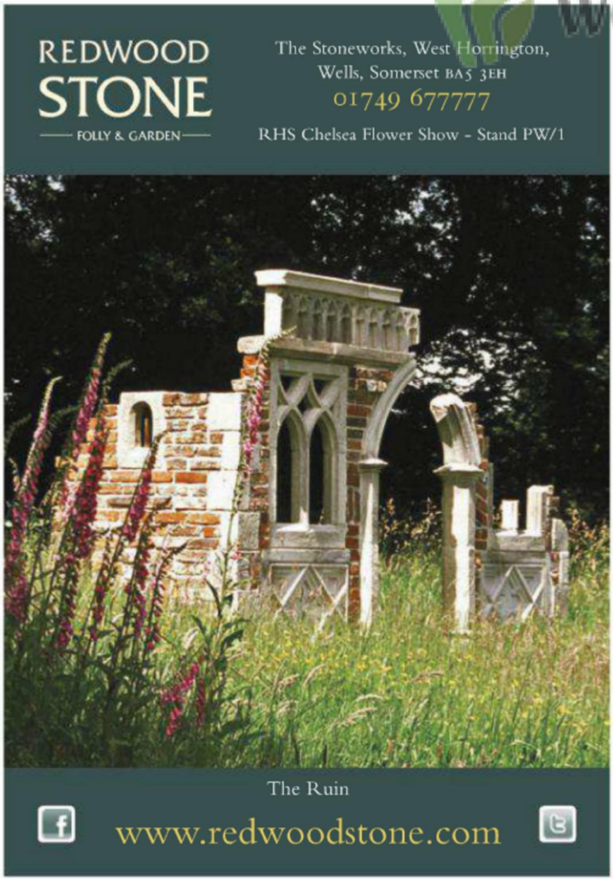
2 **Circular tree seat** with back, £795, is a new design from McKellars Ironwork, 0845 600 6545, www.mckellarsironwork.co.uk, stand RHW8. **Straw hat** from Lands' End, as before. **Dutch hoe**, £25.99 from Spear & Jackson's traditional tool range, as before.

3 The double-ended **Paper Potter Patter** from Nether Wallop Trading Co is perfect for tamping down the soil in your paper seedling pots, £4.95, 01264 355553, www.netherwalloptrading.com, stand PW15.

4 Support your peonies with this sturdy, traditional **plant support** from Muntons, in new 'Jester' shape and powder-coated finish, £95 plus £10 p&p, 0800 130 3421, www.muntons.net, stand PW10.

5 The new **'Gardener' boot**, £59, from Hunter with a sole dig-pad and ankle reinforcement, 0131 240 3672, www.hunter-boot.com, stand EA94.

6 The new RHS-endorsed **perennial spade** is designed for dividing plants. £19.95 from Burgon & Ball, 0114 233 8262, www.burgonandball.com, stand CW1. Plum **gloves** from Ethel Gloves, £11.50, 0800 783 2202, www.ethelgloves.co.uk, stand EA26, **Vintage basket** from Garden & Wood, as before.



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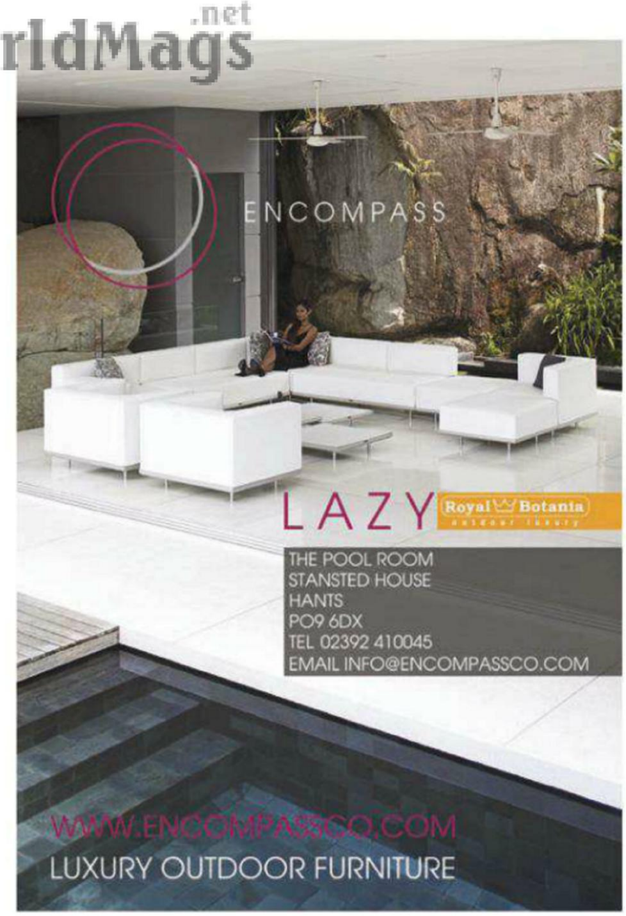

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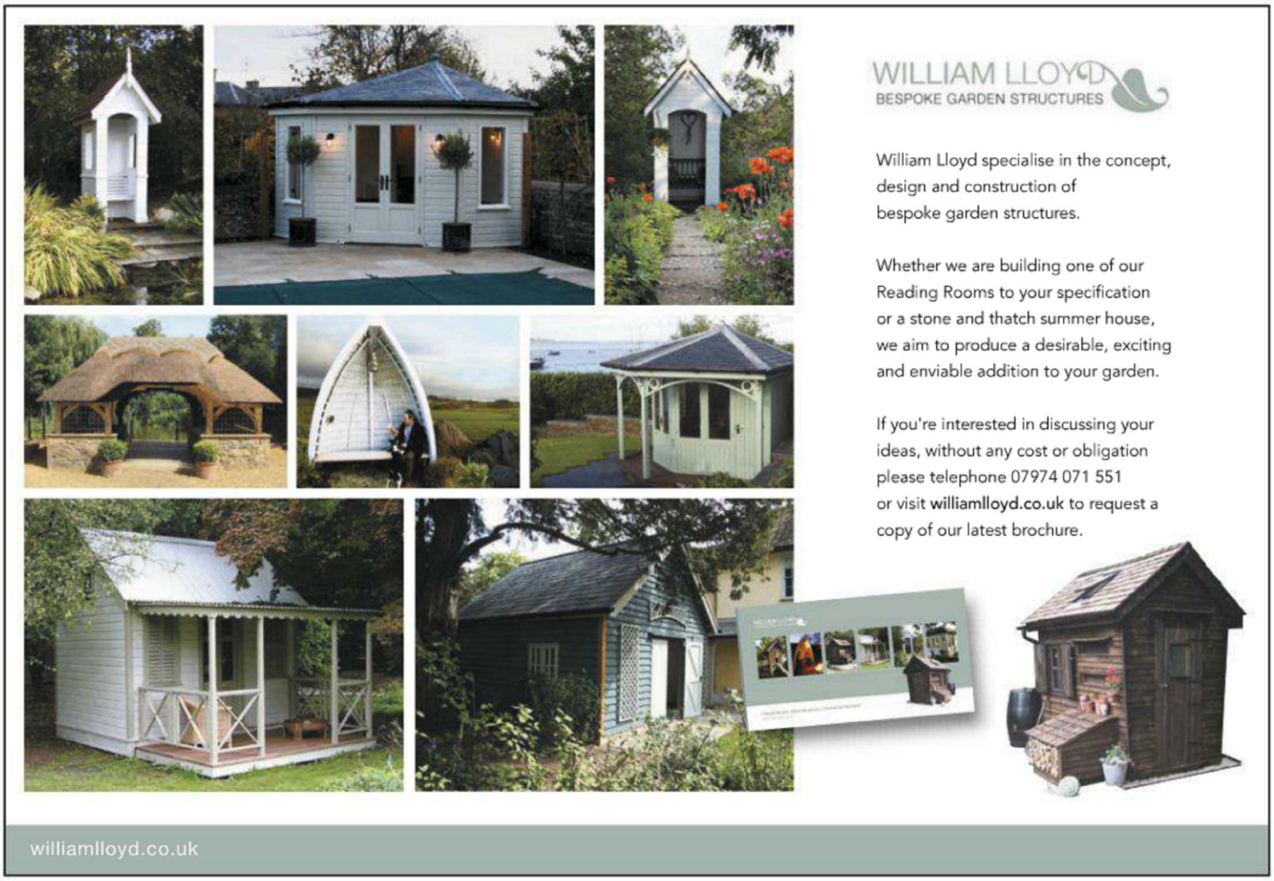

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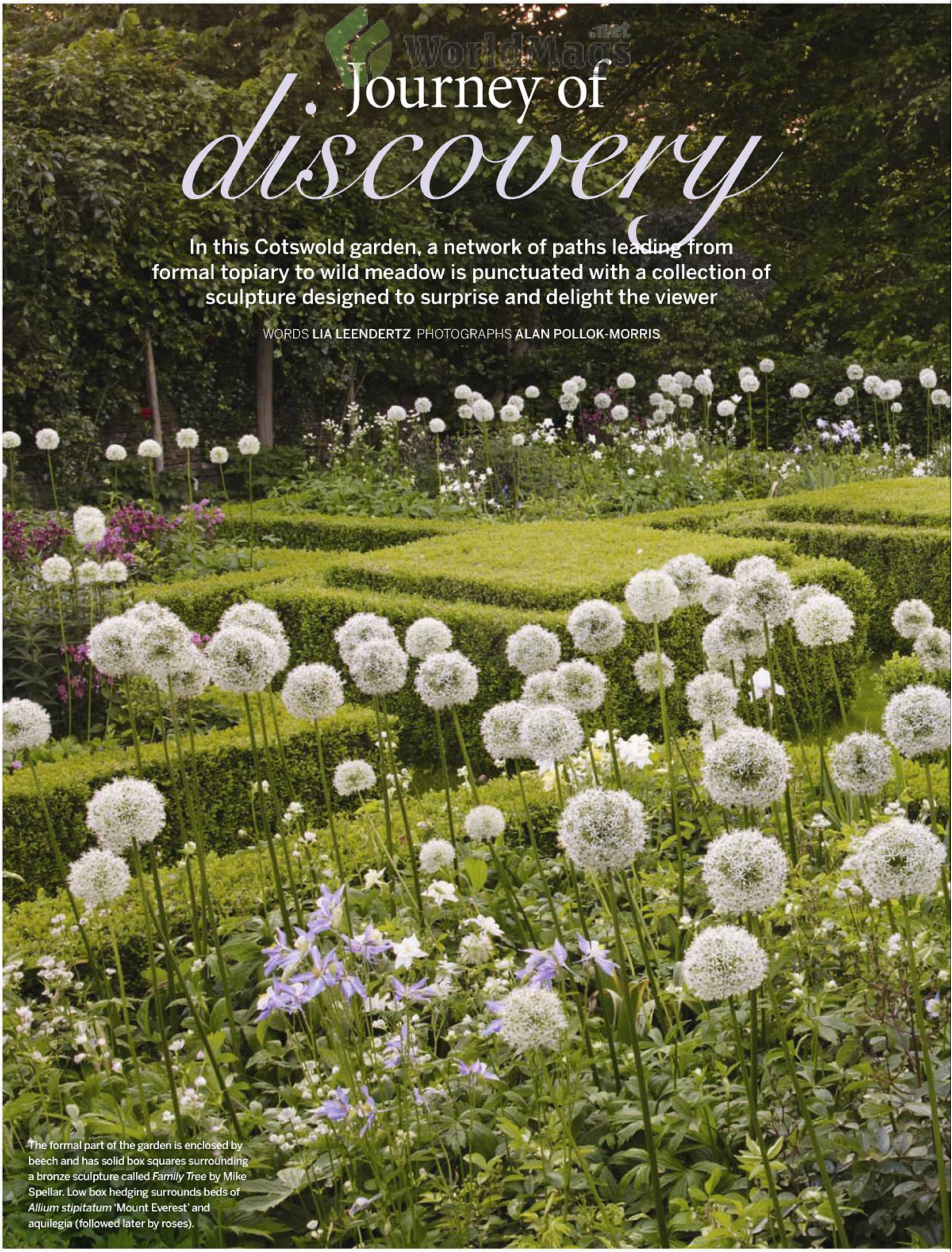
Journey of *discovery*

In this Cotswold garden, a network of paths leading from formal topiary to wild meadow is punctuated with a collection of sculpture designed to surprise and delight the viewer

WORDS **LIA LEENDERTZ** PHOTOGRAPHS **ALAN POLLOK-MORRIS**



The formal part of the garden is enclosed by beech and has solid box squares surrounding a bronze sculpture called *Family Tree* by Mike Spellar. Low box hedging surrounds beds of *Allium stipitatum* 'Mount Everest' and aquilegia (followed later by roses).

the Worldmags

In brief

WHAT **A Medieval former blacksmith's house with formal gardens and meadow planting.**

WHERE **South Cotswolds.**

SIZE **Around two acres.**

SOIL **Limestone brash, well worked and friable.**

CONDITIONS **High up in the Cotswolds, the garden has cold winters and wet summers.**

SPECIAL FEATURES **Formal garden of strong evergreens and restrained colour palette, with sculpture collection. Meadow on a shady slope.**

> *"A traditional mixed border surrounding the house is filled with roses – white rose of York and Winchester Cathedral – as well as philadelphus and lilac"*

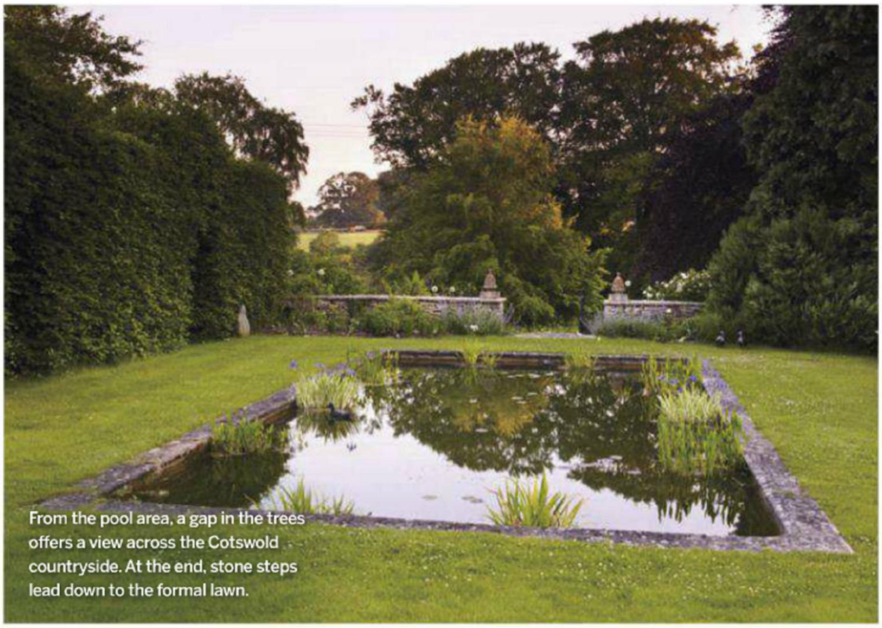
The colour theme of the mixed border was chosen by the owner Richard and includes *Allium hollandicum* 'Purple Sensation', white lilac *Syringa vulgaris* 'Madame Lemoine' and the snowball tree *Viburnum opulus* 'Roseum'.

When he was invited to visit this Cotswold garden by its owner Richard Szpiro, the designer Tim Rees was amazed to find that he had worked on it two decades ago. The design was much changed by subsequent planting of trees and Richard wanted to clear these out in order to open up the space and admit light and views into the garden. "With Richard there has been a lot of simplification," says Tim. "We have taken trees out, the axes have been strengthened and the colour scheme is more specific." The result is a much stronger and simpler garden, Tim believes. It is also a garden that is very much the result of a happy collaboration between the designer and the owner.

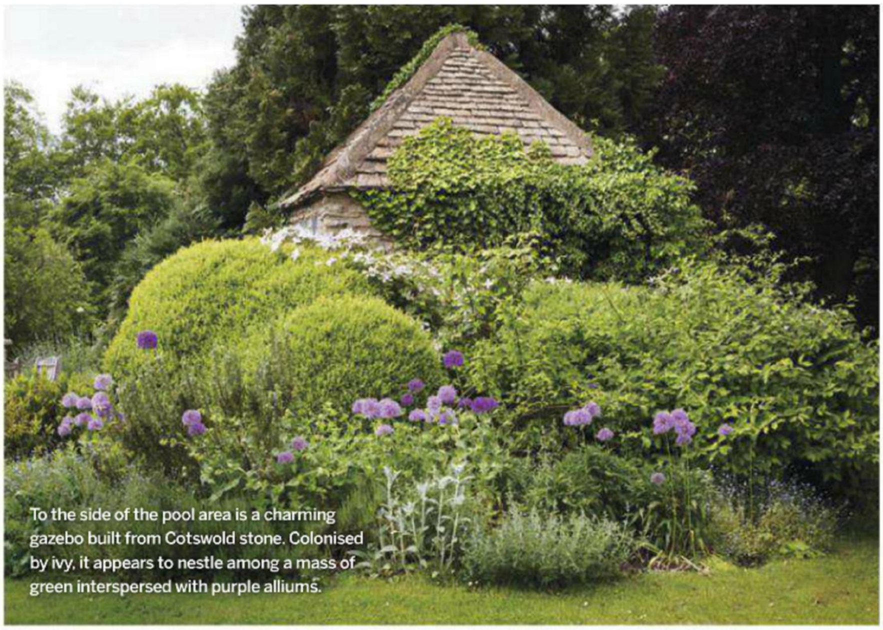
From lawn to meadow

This is a garden of contrasts, ranging from formal planting and smooth lawns to woodland and wild meadow. Starting at the beginning, by the house, shaped box is used to strong effect to create a structure that Tim calls "the grammar of the garden. Here box forms the full stops, commas and semi-colons". Against this the seasonal bulbs and perennials perform, including a traditional mixed border, based on a blue and white colour scheme, surrounding the house. It is filled with roses – white rose of York *(Rosa* x *alba* 'Alba Semiplena'), Winchester Cathedral *(=*'Auscat') and Crocus Rose *(=*'Ausquest') – as well as philadelphus and lilac.

In the most high-maintenance and striking area of the garden, low box hedging surrounds beds planted with *Allium stipitatum* 'Mount Everest' and white aquilegia, followed by roses 'Penelope', Kew Gardens (='Ausfence') and 'Yvonne Rabier'. Between the beds are four solid box ▷



From the pool area, a gap in the trees offers a view across the Cotswold countryside. At the end, stone steps lead down to the formal lawn.



To the side of the pool area is a charming gazebo built from Cotswold stone. Colonised by ivy, it appears to nestle among a mass of green interspersed with purple alliums.

In the pool area, white valerian (*Centranthus ruber* 'Albus') and catmint (*Nepeta* 'Six Hills Giant') continue the blue and white theme with stronger accents supplied by *Delphinium* 'Blue Bird'.

> *"There are strong, architectural sculptures in the formal areas, whereas in the meadow elemental, earthy pieces seem to emerge from the ground"*

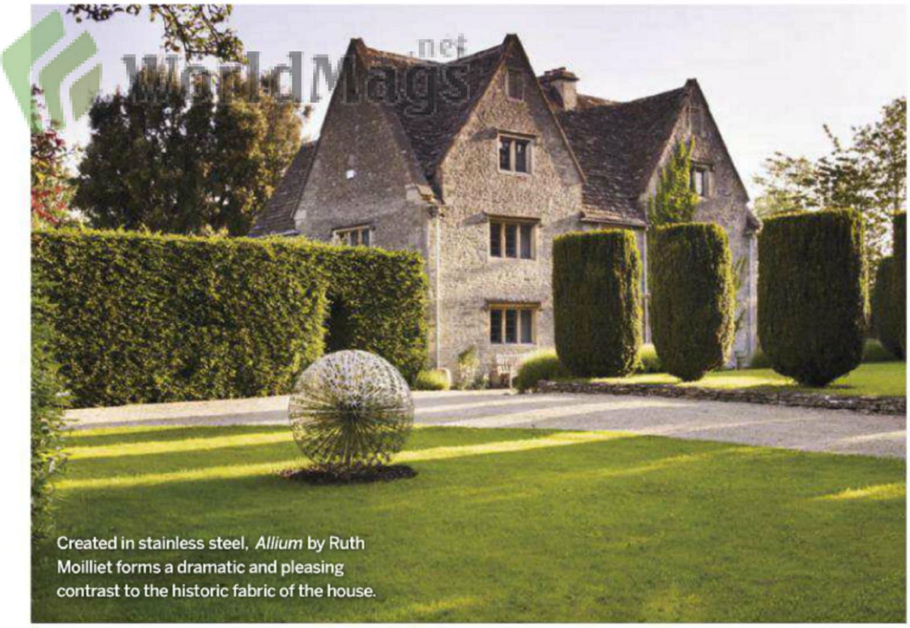
▷ squares. A central path points to a gap in the hedge with a view across fields to the south. It is deliberate and striking. Past a rectangular stone pond is a set of stone steps leading down to the formal lawn which features sculptures that Richard commissioned for the garden. Tim has introduced strips of annual meadow flowers along the edges of the lawn, a hint of things to come.

Sculptural discoveries

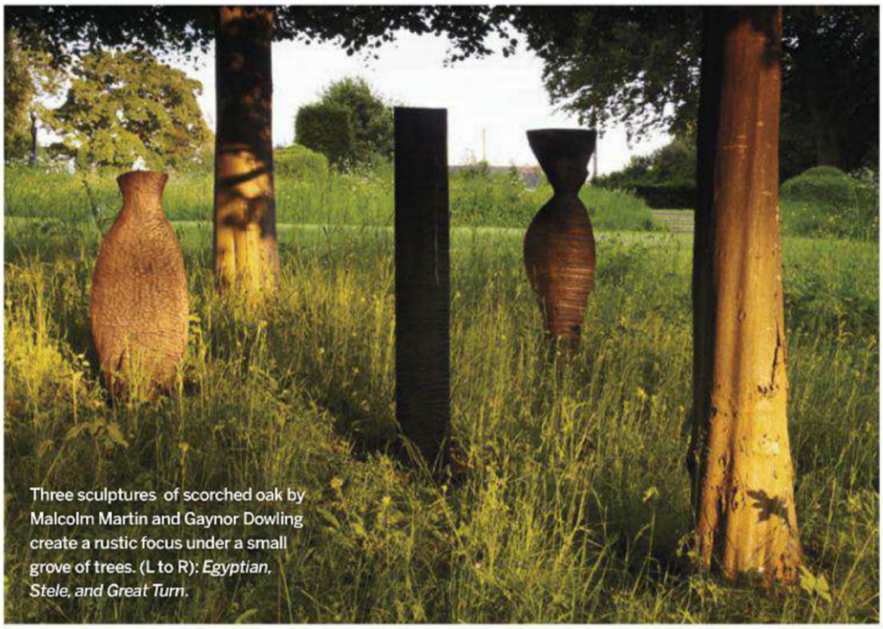
When Richard bought the house, two thirds of the garden was on a steep slope. "It was just wasted space," says Richard. "I wanted graduated pathways so that one could work one's way down and around the garden." Now, what he and Tim call a "cobweb of paths" negotiates the slope, utilising the space and linking the more formal areas of the garden with the wild meadow beyond. And, as you follow a path, you turn a corner and come across a sculpture as if by accident. This is deliberate: Richard didn't want the garden to look like an open-air art gallery: "It is important you don't see all the pieces at once. I wanted twisting paths where one would discover an individual piece of sculpture, hidden away."

Richard worked with each artist to determine the nature of the work and its location in the garden. The placement of the sculpture is subtle. "There are strong, architectural and bold pieces in the formal areas," says Richard, whereas in the meadow there are "basic, elemental, earthy pieces which seem to emerge from the ground."

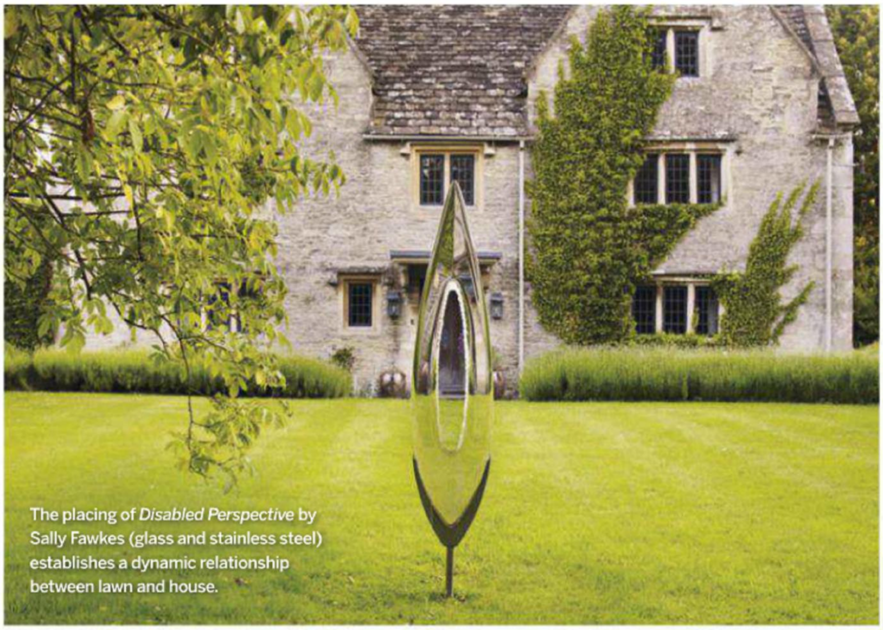
It is in the furthest reaches of this Cotswold garden – away from the formality by the house, past the grand grassy ▷



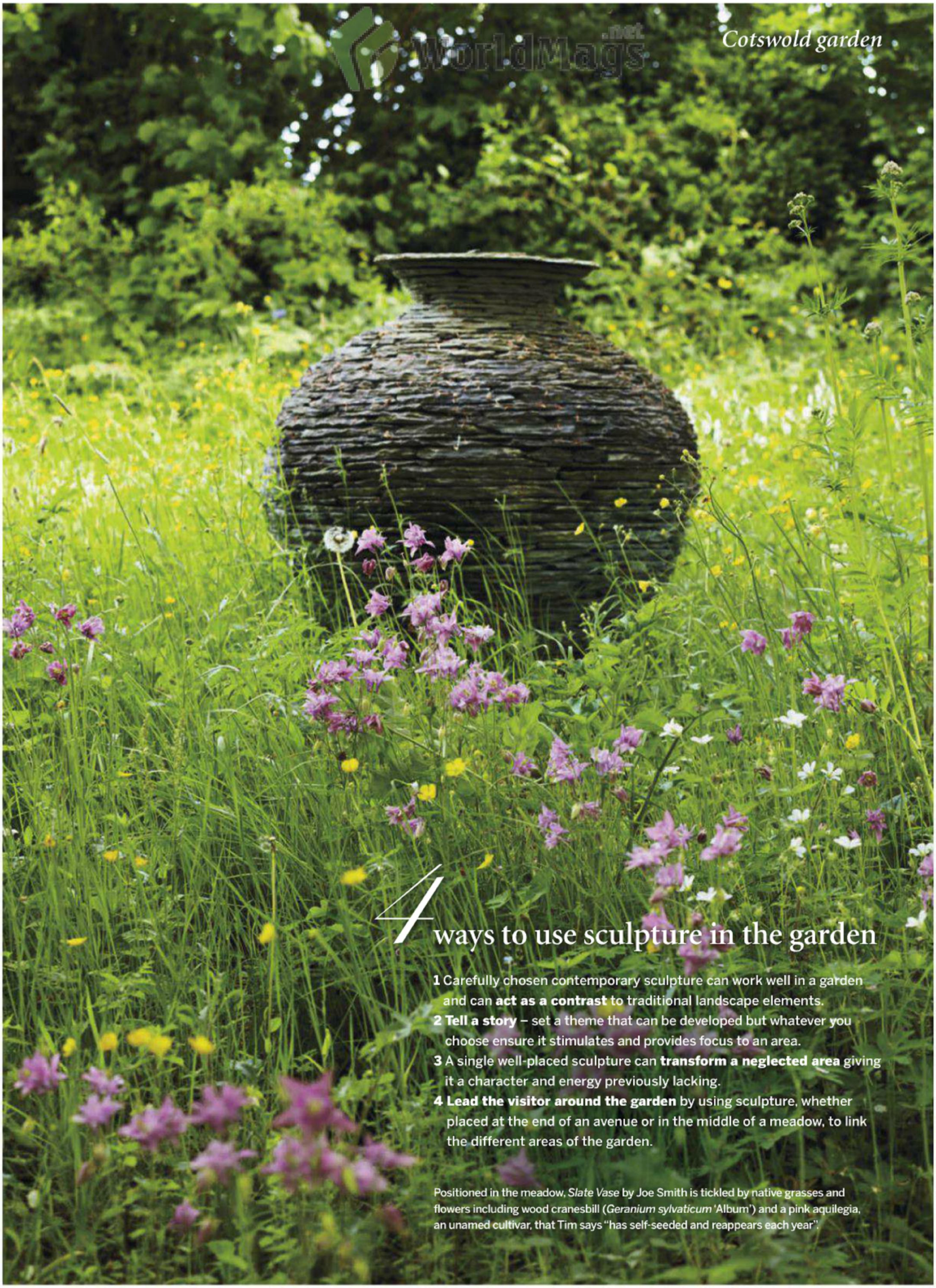
Created in stainless steel, *Allium* by Ruth Moilliet forms a dramatic and pleasing contrast to the historic fabric of the house.



Three sculptures of scorched oak by Malcolm Martin and Gaynor Dowling create a rustic focus under a small grove of trees. (L to R): *Egyptian, Stele, and Great Turn.*



The placing of *Disabled Perspective* by Sally Fawkes (glass and stainless steel) establishes a dynamic relationship between lawn and house.



4 ways to use sculpture in the garden

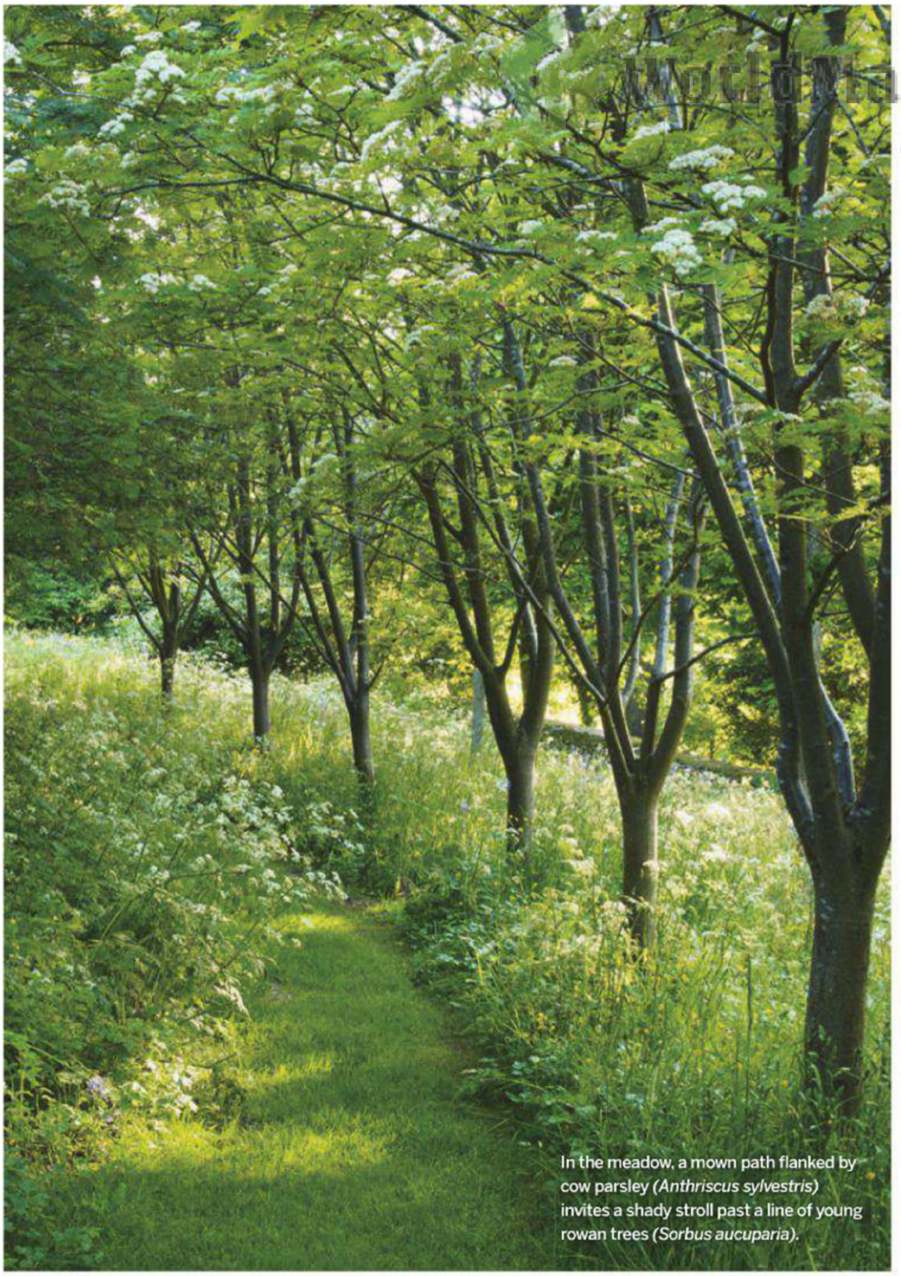
1 Carefully chosen contemporary sculpture can work well in a garden and can **act as a contrast** to traditional landscape elements.

2 **Tell a story** – set a theme that can be developed but whatever you choose ensure it stimulates and provides focus to an area.

3 A single well-placed sculpture can **transform a neglected area** giving it a character and energy previously lacking.

4 **Lead the visitor around the garden** by using sculpture, whether placed at the end of an avenue or in the middle of a meadow, to link the different areas of the garden.

Positioned in the meadow, *Slate Vase* by Joe Smith is tickled by native grasses and flowers including wood cranesbill (*Geranium sylvaticum* 'Album') and a pink aquilegia, an unamed cultivar, that Tim says "has self-seeded and reappears each year".



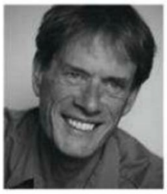
In the meadow, a mown path flanked by cow parsley *(Anthriscus sylvestris)* invites a shady stroll past a line of young rowan trees *(Sorbus aucuparia)*.

▷ terrace, down the slope – that the designer Tim Rees seems most at home. Here he has developed a romantic meadow dominated by native plants but enriched by other perennials and bulbs. It is a place to steal away to, down little winding paths, and to get lost among camassias, geraniums and native grasses. "A meadow is far more interesting than a border," Tim says. "It is interactive: you are in it, rather than looking at it".

The narrow paths wind around grasses and shrubby roses in the meadow. A few pioneer plants such as *Rosa roxburghii, Rosa sericea* subsp. *omeiensis* f. *pteracantha* and *Corylus avellana* (hazel) have been planted there. Though not native, they are the sort of plants that would naturally colonise this type of vegetation as it makes the progression towards woodland – and they add structure. Tim calls it "enriched native flora". He speckles it with *Knautia macedonica,* cornflowers (*Centaurea montana* and *C. montana* 'Alba') and geraniums. Tim says: "There is a moral side to a meadow. You are creating a balanced community. Mostly you stand back, but you do have to edit out the thugs, and gently introduce newcomers". When Tim sees a meadow he sees competition, struggles and dynamism.

Richard offers another viewpoint: "It is paradise – peace and harmony. The house is in the middle of a village but in the garden you feel as if you are far, far away – you could be miles from anywhere."□

9 of the plants Tim has used at Tudor House



Garden designer Tim Rees set up his own practice, Trees Associates, in 2003 after working for 10 years with Brita von Schoenaich (www.treesassociates.com).

In the 1990s, the pair were responsible for hosting the Kew seminars on new Dutch and German planting which brought Piet Oudolf and others to the attention of the public. He has worked on many gardens in the Mediterranean, and cites its landscape and way of gardening as his greatest influence.

1 **Box *(Buxus sempervirens)***
Used throughout the garden as a strong framework and to create anchor points.

2 ***Allium stipitatum* 'Mount Everest'**
Used in the formal part of the garden. "Big white globes of flowers," says Tim Rees.

3 ***Schizophragma hydrangeoides***
"A climber used on shady walls, with a better flower than *Hydrangea petiolaris*."

4 ***Rosa* 'Ghislaine de Féligonde'**
A rambling rose with a mix of yolk yellow and white flowers and a musky scent.

5 **Turkish hazel *(Corylus colurna)***
A useful plant in the meadow, says Tim: "It is broadly pyramidal, and has a flaky bark."

6 ***Chamaenerion angustifolium* 'Album'**
A pure white rosebay willowherb that offers "white spires of flowers at a useful time".

7 ***Aquilegia* 'Kristall'**
A white columbine with distinctive, long spurs. Strong growing.

8 ***Rosa roxburghii***
Chestnut rose, used in the meadow. "I love the beautiful brown peeling bark in winter."

9 **Yellow rattle *(Rhinanthus minor)***
Essential for a meadow. "It helps control the vigour of grasses," because it is partly parasitic.

3 GFK-FLORA / ALAMY; 4 ANNE GREEN-ARMYTAGE / GAP PHOTOS; 6 IMAGEFLORA; 9 FLORAPIX / ALAMY

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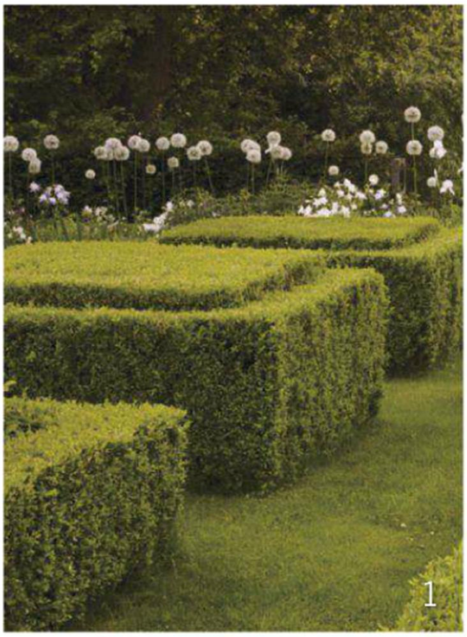
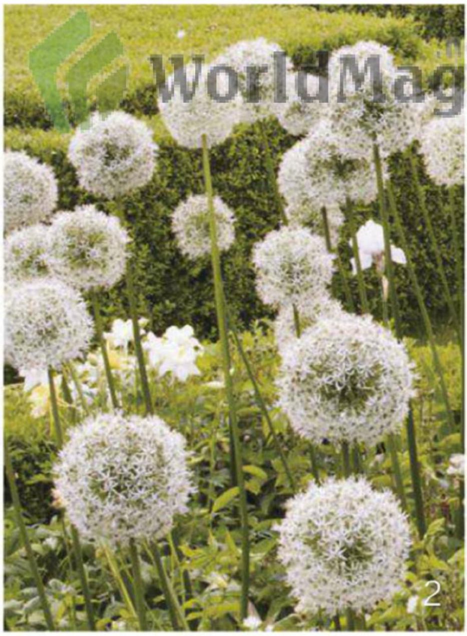
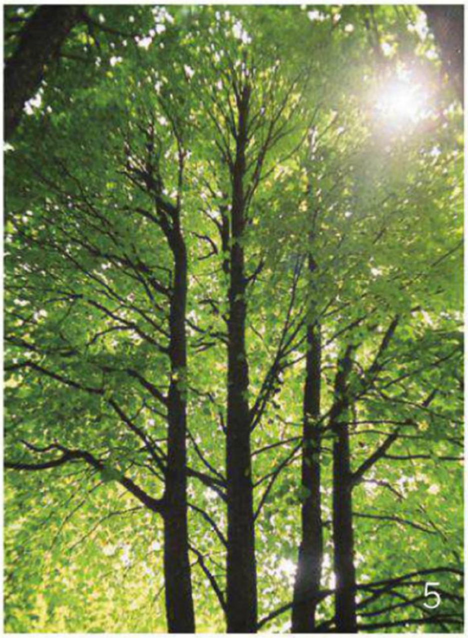




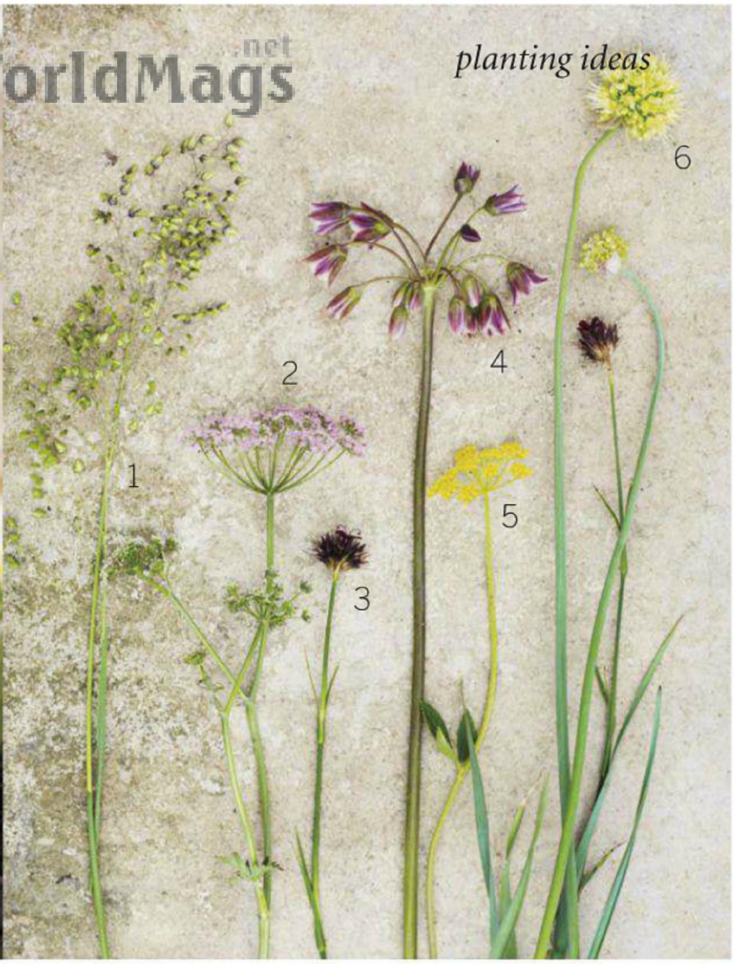


Year-round pots

With the right choice of plants your pots can look good all year round, putting on a low-maintenance display that changes with the seasons

WORDS **SARAH PRICE** PHOTOGRAPHS **ANDREW MONTGOMERY**

Sarah Price is a garden designer whose planting can be seen in London's Olympic Park and at this year's Chelsea Flower Show.



Mini-meadow

'Shabby chic' can be a cliché, but old industrial and agricultural containers are charming in the right setting. Here, with the distressed walls and my meadow-inspired planting, the effect is of a bygone country idyll. There is a soft informality to this delicate arrangement. The grasses provide a background foil to the perennials and bulbs which have leafless stems, allowing a greater density or 'layering' of plants. Pinpricks of intense colour complete the composition. The nectar-rich flowers will attract passing bees and butterflies.

How to achieve the look

Colours and shapes

The lovely porphyry pink of the largest bucket made me reach for the show-stopping carmine of *Dianthus cruentus.* The two native grasses, *Deschampsia flexuosa* and *Briza media* will shiver in the slightest breeze and I've put one in each of the larger pots so their evergreen foliage gives year round presence. The dianthus will be happy in the smaller bucket, and being long-flowering can stand alone through the seasons. The grasses will turn a golden buff and the *Nectaroscordum siculum* produces fascinating seedheads. *Allium obliquum* has a tightly packed lime-yellow flower and its stem has a quirky yet beautiful line. The eastern USA native *Zizia aptera* (golden alexanders), has intense saffron-yellow umbels. Also in the *Apiaceae* family is *Pimpinella major* 'Rosea' which looks like a pink cow parsley.

Choosing pots

Try and vary sizes of pots to create a balanced and interesting composition. Make sure there is good drainage – drill holes when necessary.

Compost and care

This arrangement needs a sunny aspect and well-drained soil: a 50:50 mix of John Innes No. 2 and a multipurpose compost. Protect from excessive winter wet. The dianthus should be trimmed after flowering to promote new growth. A second prune in spring as new shoots emerge will also help the dianthus maintain a tidy shape.

Plants

1. *Briza media*
AMOUNT 1 SEASON Evergreen, flowers May to June HEIGHT 90cm

2. *Pimpinella major* 'Rosea'
AMOUNT 1 SEASON Flowers May to June HEIGHT 120cm

3. *Dianthus cruentus*
AMOUNT 1 SEASON Flowers June to August HEIGHT 60cm

4. *Nectaroscordum siculum*
AMOUNT 4 SEASON Flowers May to June HEIGHT 120cm

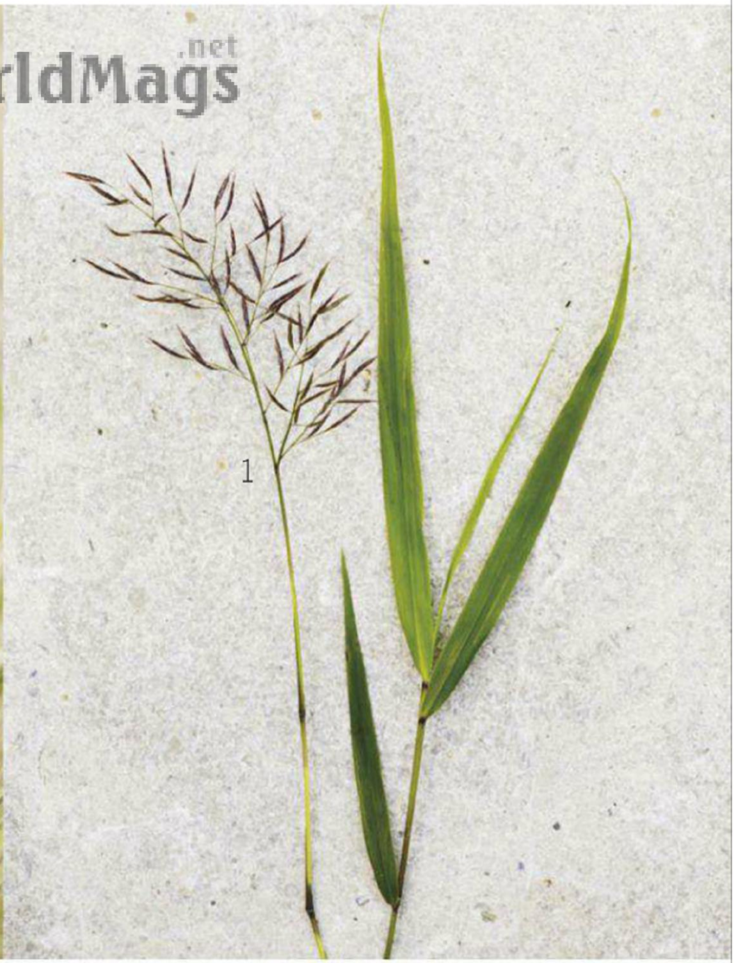
5. *Zizia aptera*
AMOUNT 2 SEASON May to June HEIGHT 60cm

6. *Allium obliquum*
AMOUNT 4 SEASON March to May HEIGHT 75cm

7. *Deschampsia flexuosa* (seen in the larger pot) AMOUNT 2 SEASON Evergreen HEIGHT Up to 60cm

Suppliers

Marina Christopher, Phoenix Perennial Plants, Alton GU34 5PR. Tel 01420 560695.



Simplicity itself

Simplicity can sometimes be best. A pot with just one type of plant will always make a bold visual statement and *Hakonechloa macra* is a grass well known for going solo. It is a graceful plant that forms low mounds of arching, densely overlapping leaves. It's sometimes known as Japanese forest grass, a name that reminds us of its origins and preferred growing conditions: semi-shaded, cool and moist environments. The fine green flowers add a layer of frothy lightness at midsummer. Late in the year the fresh green foliage takes on a more autumnal shade. Popularised by Tom Stuart-Smith's plantings outside the Wisley glasshouse, this looks best en masse whether allowed to slowly spread over a large expanse of ground or in a pot.

How to achieve the look

Plenty of plants

Be generous with numbers as hakonechloa is a slow grower; I used six three-litre plants. The golden variegated forms of *Hakonechloa macra,* such as 'Aureola', are more commonly stocked in garden centres but I find their jarring variegated leaves harder to place.

Shape of pot

I've chosen a wide terracotta pot with handles but this grass would look equally good in sleek urban planters within a minimalist setting. It's important that the width of the pot is sufficient for the leaves to arch gracefully, so the plant's whole form can be fully appreciated.

Well-drained, humus-rich compost

A cool, moist, partly shaded environment is ideal but the grass will also tolerate both shade and sun, providing there is adequate moisture. Make sure the compost is well drained but humus-rich, so add plenty of well-rotted garden compost.

This pot requires minimal maintenance but don't forget to water and to cut back and mulch the grass in late winter before the new shoots emerge.

I recommend always looking back to the plant's origins, as its habitat will provide a guide to not only its growing conditions but also what will work well as companion plants.

Plants

1 Hakonechloa macra

AMOUNT 6

SEASON Semi-evergreen, flowers from June to July

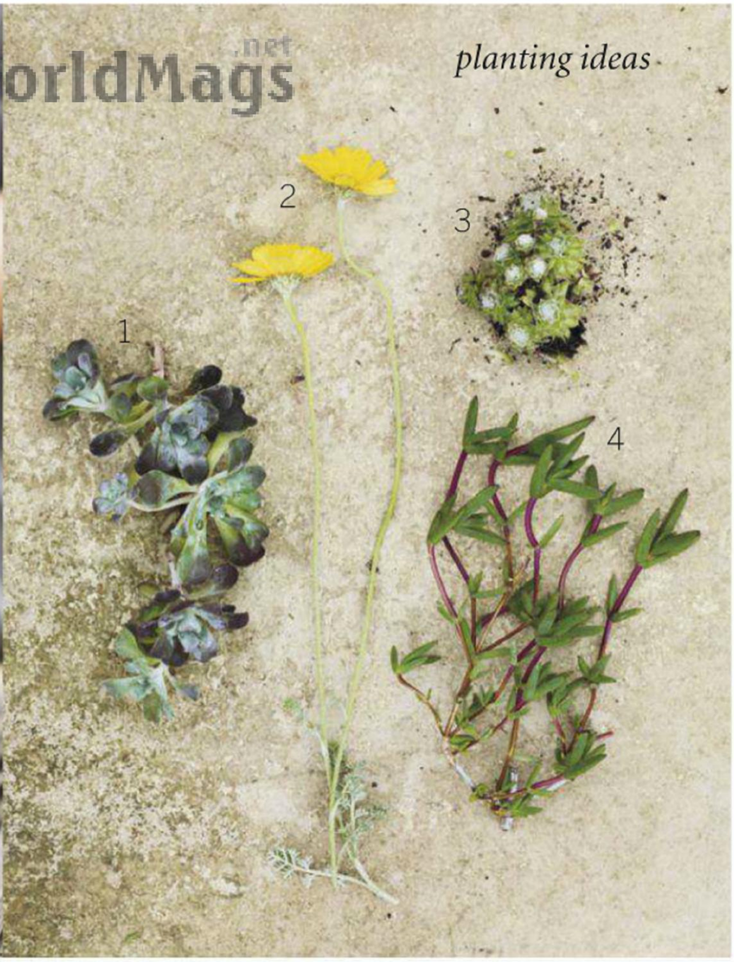
HEIGHT Around 35cm

Suppliers

Crocus, Tel 0844 557 2244, www.crocus.co.uk

Knoll Gardens, Wimborne BH21 7ND. Tel 01202 873931, www.knollgardens.co.uk

Pan-Global Plants, Frampton-on-Severn GL2 7EX. Tel 01452 741641, www.panglobalplants.com



Pewter and grey

This pair of unusual trefoil-shaped pots was a lucky find. Made from lightweight glass reinforced concrete (GRC), they have acquired a fine mottled surface that relates beautifully to the fleshy pewter foliage of *Sedum spathulifolium* 'Cape Blanco', the key plant of this scheme. The low silver mounds of finely cut *Anthemis* leaves create a further tonal relation. It might be hard to find similarly shaped pots, but equivalent tonal relationships can be drawn between the sedum's leaves and concrete or stone trough containers. These rockery plants work hard, providing year-round interest in even the most demanding dry, sun-blasted spot. The *Anthemis marschalliana* flowers profusely from late spring to summer while the sedum's finest moment is winter, when its foliage takes on astonishing shades of red and purple.

How to achieve the look

Tapestry of colour

This is about creating a low tapestry of grey, silver and purple. The acid-yellow flowers sing against such grounded monotones and the glaucous leaves. The anthemis's daisy appears to hover as if weightless, while the sedum's sprays of starry yellow flowers appear more rigid. I've added rugged clumps of *Jovibarba allionii* into the mix for textural contrast but the closely-related house leek *Sempervivum* would also work. Also included is the unusual evergreen succulent *Lampranthus spectabilis* 'Tresco Apricot', chosen for its red flushed stems, and yellow midsummer flowers.

Add some grit

Mix horticultural grit into your compost, as these plants need a well-drained soil with low fertility (a 25:75 mix of grit to John Innes No. 1 or No. 2 is ideal). A layer of grit around the plant necks helps protect them from winter wet. The plants do not need feeding.

Division and cuttings

The sedum grows quickly to hug the pot's edge, so divide plants in March to May to uncover the outline of your container. Take anthemis cuttings in May to July and separate and plant up the *Jovibarba allionii* offsets.

Plants

***1 Sedum spathulifolium* 'Cape Blanco'**
AMOUNT 3 SEASON Evergreen, flowers June-July HEIGHT 8cm

2 Anthemis marschalliana
AMOUNT 3 SEASON Flowers May to June HEIGHT About 30cm

3 Jovibarba allionii
AMOUNT 1 SEASON Evergreen, flowers July-August HEIGHT 8cm

***4 Lampranthus spectabilis* 'Tresco Apricot'**
AMOUNT 1 SEASON Evergreen, flowers May to June HEIGHT 35cm

Suppliers

Beth Chatto, Colchester CO7 7EN. Tel 01206 822007, www.bethchattoshop.co.uk

RHS Wisley Plant Centre, Woking GU23 6QB. Tel 01483 211113, www.rhs.org.uk/wisleyplantcentre

Pots and photoshoot: **Artefacts at the Medicine Garden,** Cobham KT11 3LU. Tel 07894 149865, www.artefacts.uk.net

Classic bearded iris

Older cultivars of bearded iris have a natural elegance that is often lacking in modern creations

WORDS **MICHAEL LOFTUS** PHOTOGRAPHS **JANE SEBIRE**

In brief

WHAT **There are around 100,000 cultivars of bearded iris.**

ORIGINS **All derive from species native to the Northern Hemisphere.**

SEASON **They flower April to June and repeat flowering cultivars again from July to December.**

SIZE **Height 25cm to 120cm.**

CONDITIONS **Bearded Irises need full sun and well-drained soil, preferably alkine or neutral, as well as a position with good air circulation.**

IRIS **'BLUE RHYTHM'**
A welcome late-flowering cultivar with an abundance of flowers in late June. Introduced in 1945, it is perhaps the truest blue of any iris. HEIGHT (H) 100m.

Michael Loftus owns Woottens of Wenhaston, a nursery specialising in pelargoniums, hemerocallis, auriculas and irises (with a collection of 300 pre-1960 irises).

The *Iris* genus comprises approximately 270 species – all of which are native to the Northern Hemisphere. All have six petals, technically called tepals. The three upper petals are known as 'the standards' and the three lower as 'the falls'. Although a number of iris (such as *Iris reticulata*) are bulbous, most species (including all the bearded) are rhizomatous.

Bearded irises are so called from the often decorative beards which sit at the back of each of the falls. The early tall bearded iris garden cultivars were all diploids derived from crosses between *Iris pallida* and *I. variegata,* and have small blooms, narrow stems and fragile petals. In the late 19th century Sir Michael Foster started to experiment with crossing diploid *I. pallida* or *I. variegata* hybrids with Asiatic species, which unknown to him were tetraploids. Diploid and tetraploid refer to the number of chromosomes in a cell, tetraploid having double the number with inevitably increased vigour. This work was continued in the first years of the 20th century by iris breeder Arthur Bliss.

The flowers of these new tetraploid cultivars had petals of greater substance, larger flowers with richer colours and stouter stems, but still retained much of the elegance of the old diploid cultivars. Until about 1960 the benefits conferred by this programme of hybridisation outweighed the drawbacks. In the last half century, however, the introduction of tetraploid bearded irises into the breeding programme can be seen as a Pandora's box, which has resulted in increasing degradation of form.

Since 1960 iris breeding has been seduced by ruffles and lacing and the natural elegance of form of the older cultivars of bearded iris has become indecipherable. A stodgy congealed mass of petals has replaced the airy elegant arches formed by the standards of older cultivars. Falls no longer fall but have been reduced to almost horizontal stubs. Flowers are a monstrous size, petals thick and coarse and stems like brussels sprout stalks. A similar degradation can ▷

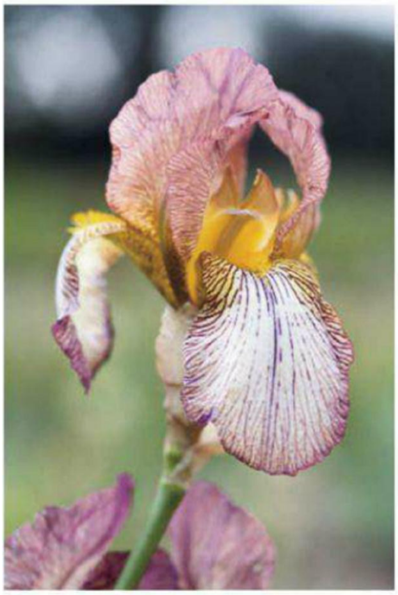
▷ be seen in many modern *Hemerocallis* cultivars, which again can be traced back to a concentration on tetraploid breeding at the expense of older, more elegant, diploids.

The photos here are of pre-1960 cultivars. Under the classification system of the American Iris society, all irises over 20 years old are classified as 'historics', a classification that annually increases its scope by another year's cultivars. I require a less slippery criterion and use the term 'classic bearded irises' for all irises introduced before 1960.

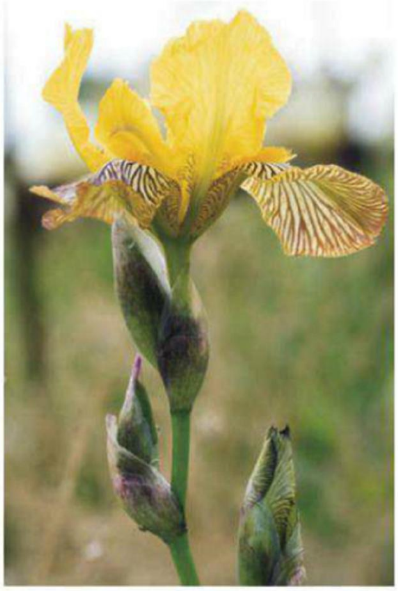
The greatest British bearded iris breeder from this classic period was artist Cedric Morris (1889–1982). I still remember as a child visiting his garden at Benton End near Hadleigh in Suffolk and my first sight of his impeccably elegant iris cultivars. *Iris* 'Benton Ankaret' (right) and *I.* 'Storrington' (page 74) both bear witness to his painterly eye; perhaps the RHS should recruit artists as plant breeders. In France the most distinguished breeder of the period was Ferdinand Cayeux. *I.* 'Louvois' (opposite) is still one of the most elegant of brown irises. *I.* 'Beottie' is to my knowledge, the only true lavender grey 'self' [standards and falls the same colour] ever bred. In America iris breeding was dominated by Henry Sass, Bertrand Farr, Grace Sturtevant and the Schreiner family. It is interesting to compare early, exquisite Schreiner introductions such as *I.* 'Harbor Blue' (page 74) with their present day creations such as *I.* 'Blue Suede Shoes', a cultivar which seems as remote from classical ideas of beauty as a body-builder pumped full of steroids.

If, like me, you garden in a tapestry style, using a host of small-flowered perennials, you will find classic irises integrate better into your schemes than their modern counterparts. Plant classic bearded iris with hardy geraniums, delphiniums, old-fashioned roses and single peonies for a quiet harmony, and leave the brazen beasts of the modern hybridisers for roundabouts and municipal gardens.☐

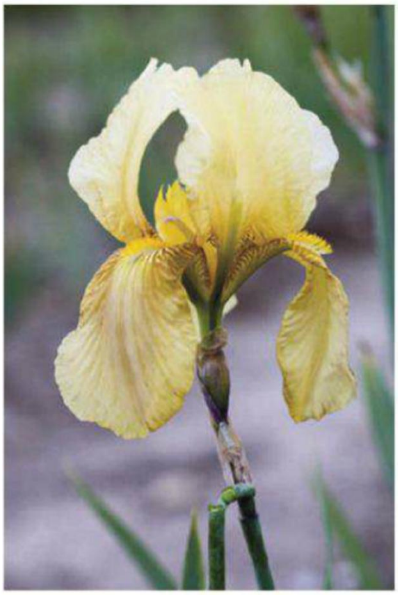
• Michael's choice of favourites continues over the next six pages.



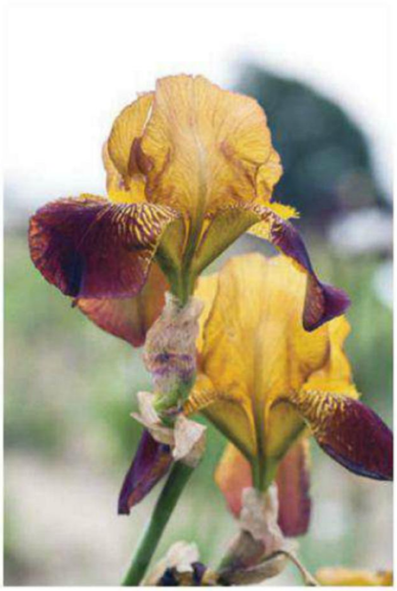
***IRIS* 'BENTON ANKARET'**
Thanks to iris collector Sarah Cook, many of Morris's lost 1950s plicatas [plicatas are white to yellow, veined in a different colour] have been bought back into cultivation. H 100cm.



***I.* 'CHENEDELLE'**
Small flowered, diploid variegata introduced in 1872. Delightfully demure compared to modern florid variegatas [yellow standard with red, maroon or brown falls]. H 53cm.

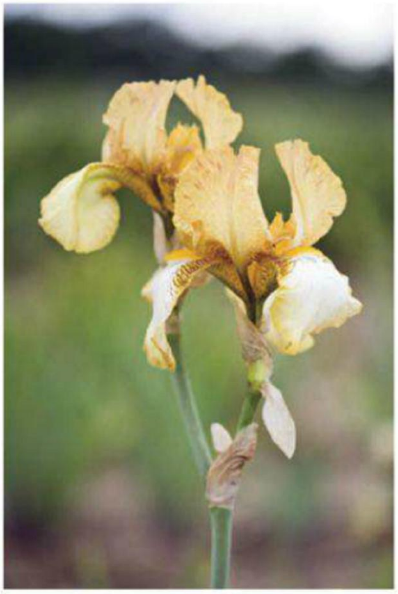


***I.* 'GLEN ELLEN'**
Introduced by Connell-Williams in 1939, this wonderful luminous yellow is preferable to modern yellow irises which tend to be far too loud with excessive ruffling. H 90cm.

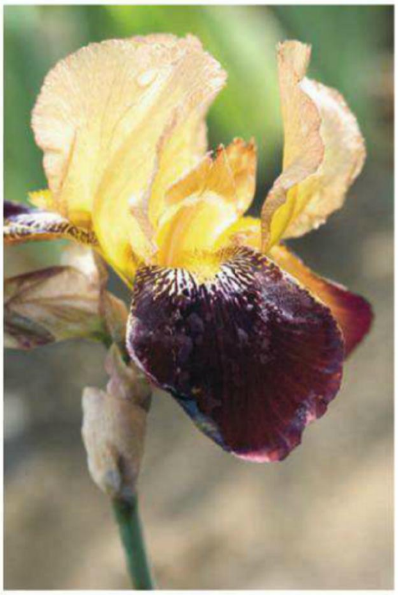


***I.* 'MISS ARAVILLA'**
Introduced in 1938, this is an elegant early variegata. In comparison, the modern variegata 'Iris Idol' (1996) looks like a dollop of custard on a chocolate pudding. H 91cm.

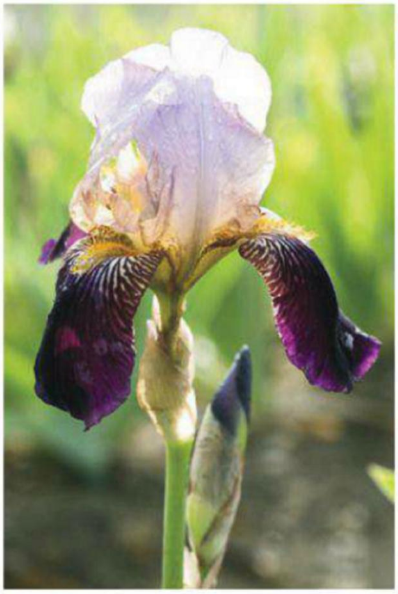
WorldMags



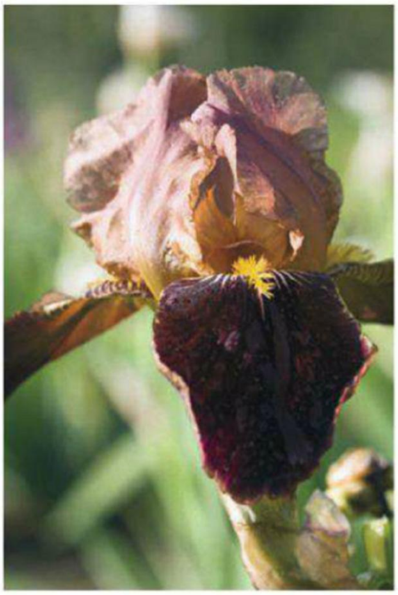
***I.* 'BENTON SUSAN'**
A typical, Cedric Morris plicata. Beautifully tailored and restrained. Introduced in 1946. Benton End was the name of Cedric Morris's house near Hadleigh in Suffolk. H 90cm.



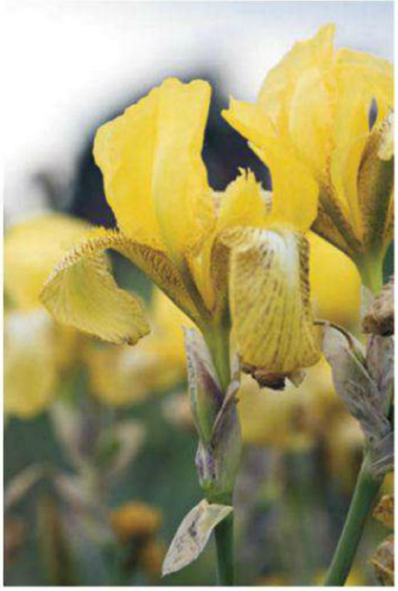
***I.* 'EL TOVAR'**
A variegata with great intensity of colour, introduced in 1933 by the great American iris breeder HP Sass, perhaps best remembered as creator of 'Prairie Sunset'. H 91cm.



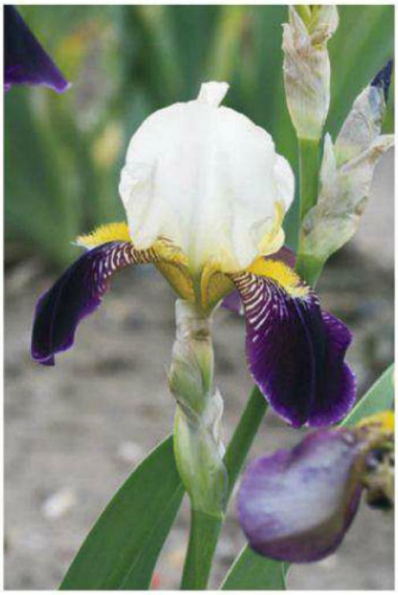
***I.* 'AMBASSADEUR'**
Introduced in 1920, with all the attributes of a classic: arching standards, long pendant falls, elegant narrow stem. Voted world's best iris by the American Iris Society in 1932. H 100cm.



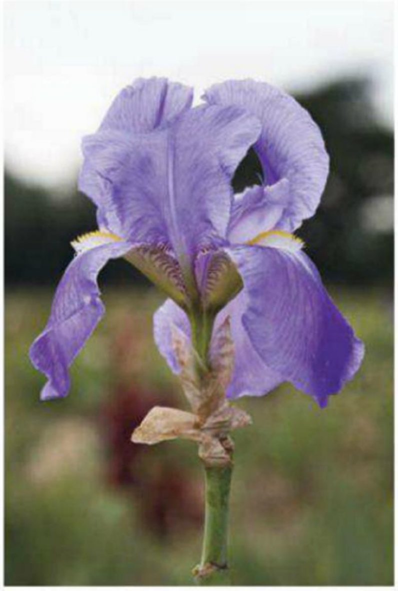
***I.* 'LOUVOIS'**
Modest in size and beautifully tailored, this 1938 introduction is infinitely preferable to modern introductions such as 'Dynamite' with its vast, clumsy, ruffled flowers. H 85cm.



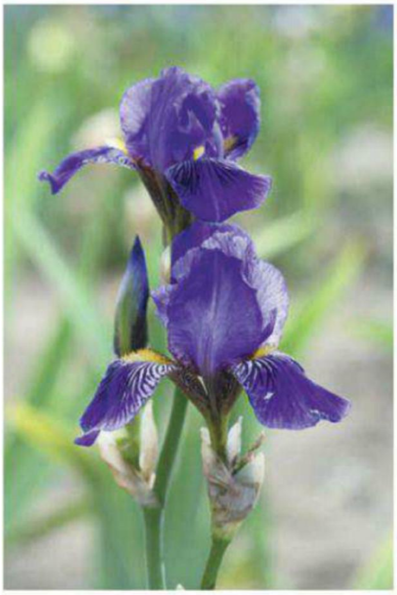
***I.* 'BROWN'S MUTANT'**
A sport [the term for a variant caused by mutation] of 'Honorabile', found in a garden in 1967. It has softer colours than 'Honorabile' but preserves its classic form. H 61cm.



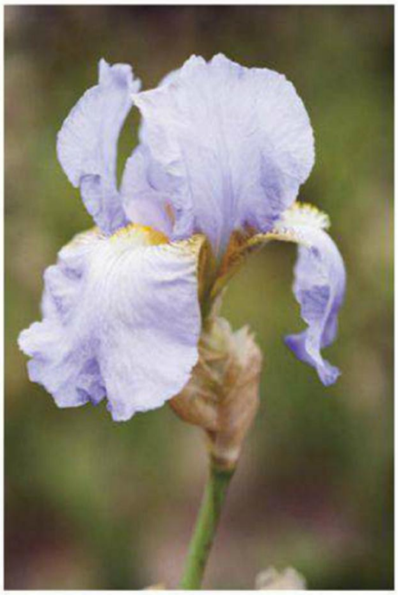
***I.* 'MILDRED PRESBY'**
This exquisitely elegant amoena [white or cream standard with coloured falls] was introduced in 1923 and has the American Iris Society Award of Merit. H 80cm.



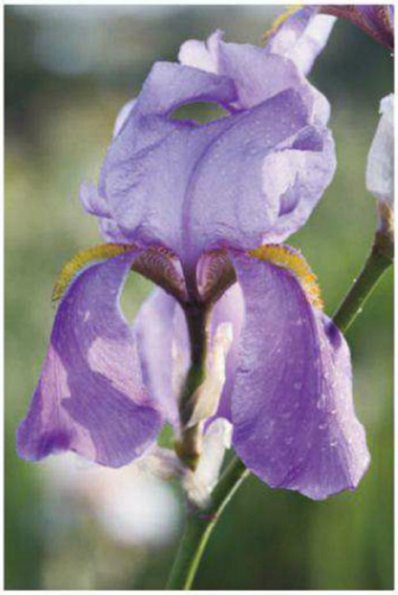
IRIS PALLIDA
All tall bearded irises are descended from this one. John Gerard, the 16th-century herbalist, grew it in his Holborn garden and wrote: 'the flowers to smell exceeding sweete'. H 75cm.



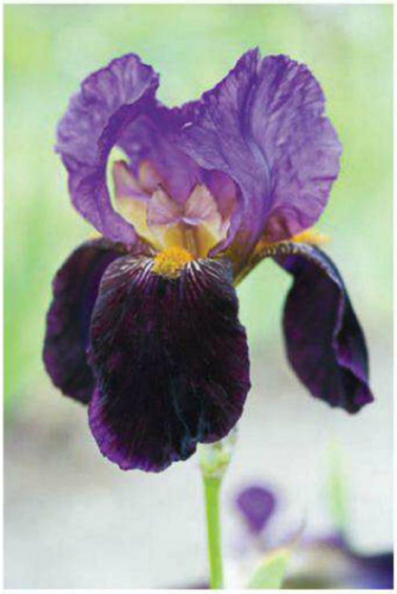
***I.* 'BUTTERFLY DANCE'**
A miniature bearded iris introduced by Dorothy Willott in 2000. This exciting new breeding line is creating plants with the elegance and assurance of classic irises. H 63cm.



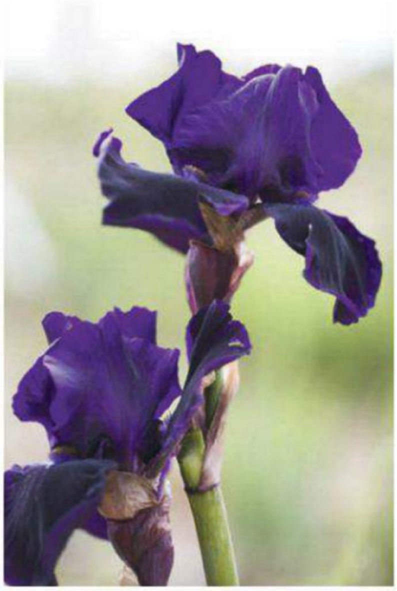
***I.* 'HARBOR BLUE'**
A beautiful early hybrid, introduced in 1954. It displays one of the essential features of a classic iris – the arch formed by the standards, through which light can be seen. H 102cm.



***I.* 'DOG ROSE'**
Introduced by Violet Insole in 1930, this has lovely thin petals and is a delicate pink, unlike the regrettable screaming shrimp of modern true pink bearded irises. H 75cm.



***I.* 'STORRINGTON'**
A very vigorous bitone [different tones of one colour] with a classic form, introduced by Cedric Morris in the 1950s. He much cherished its extended falls. H 107cm.



***I.* 'INTERPOL'**
Bred in 1972, this iris was first marketed in Schreiner's 1981 catalogue. It is just on the tipping point of classic iris turning into modern ruffled bling. H 95cm.

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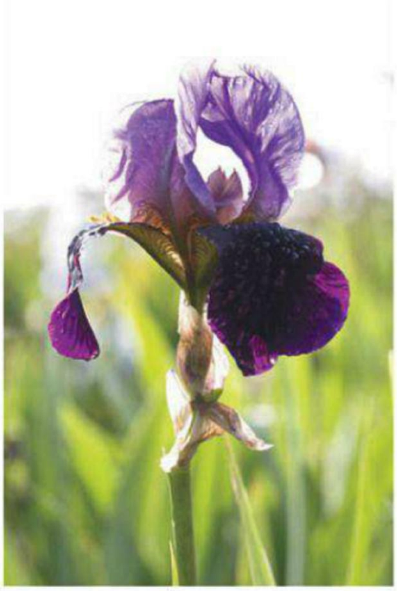
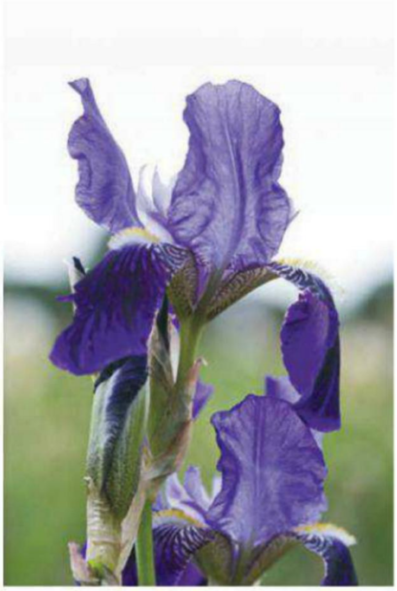
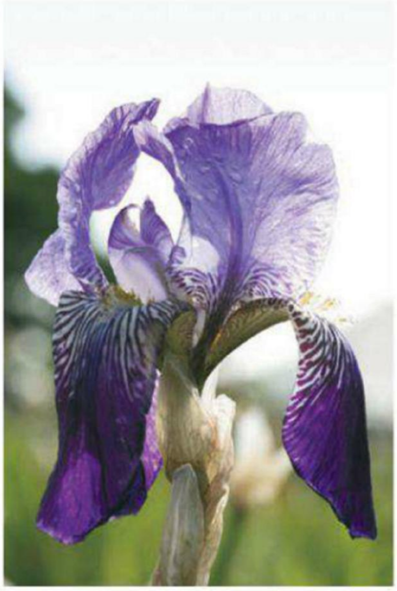


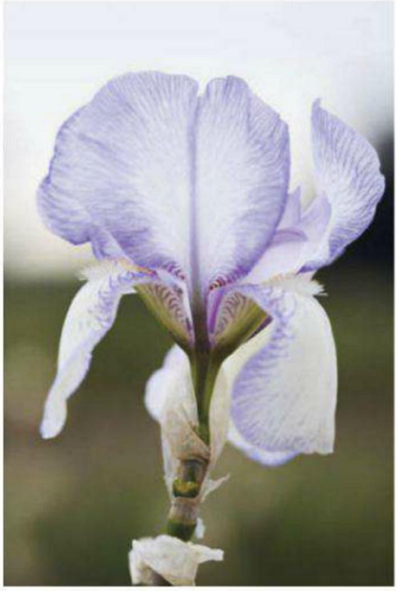
I. **'CAMEROUN'**
Introduced by Ferdinand Cayeux in 1938. This is a fine example of a classic iris, a bitone that has beautiful pink standards and deep wine red falls. H 85m.



I. **'OTHELLO'**
A fine antique neglacta [pale blue standards with darker blue or purple falls] that was introduced in 1912. Its lax slender foliage is much admired. H 90cm.



I. **'MUSSOLINI'**
This lovely classic iris has a striking graphic shape. It was introduced in 1932 by the artist Katherine Dykes who was married to William Dykes, a great iris hybridiser. H 100cm.



I. **'TRUE CHARM'**
This object lesson in simplicity of form and delicacy of colouring was introduced by Grace Sturtevant in 1920. Modern plicatas are heavier in shape with more lurid markings. H 70cm.

Position

Bearded irises need an open position where they can feel the breeze. Poor air circulation, like sticky soil, leads to bacterial problems. To flower well, bearded irises need full sun for at least six hours a day.

Soil preparation

Bearded irises are easy plants in well-drained soil. They dislike sticky clay soils, which greatly increase the likelihood of bacterial problems. They prefer the soil to be alkaline or neutral. Acid soil should be limed. If the soil is heavy and needs breaking up, dig in quantities of spent mushroom compost or garden compost. Irises do not like excessive nitrogen; never incorporate animal manure into a new bed. Make sure that any preparation work is completed a month before planting, so that the soil can settle.

Planting irises

Irises should be planted between July and October, as all their new root development is done in late autumn and early winter. Never transplant bearded irises in spring.

Diseases and pests

Bearded irises are troubled by few pests. Rabbits and caterpillars shun them. Slugs show only a mild interest. The biggest disease problem with bearded irises is fungal leaf spot which in wet seasons can badly affect their foliage. It is best to spray on a preventative basis rather than wait till signs of fungal leaf spot are evident. We spray with a systemic fungicide every three weeks throughout the season – the first application is made when the foliage is about 13cms high.

WHERE TO SEE AND BUY IRISES

Gardens

- **Wootens of Wenhaston**
Blackheath Road, Wenhaston,
Halesworth, Suffolk IP19 9HD.
Tel 01502 478258,
www.woottensplants.co.uk
Four acres of iris fields open for viewing from 24 May to 10 June 2012.

Nurseries

- **National Collection – Claire Austin Hardy Plants,**
White Hopton Farm, Wern Lane
Sarn, Newtown SY16 4EN.
Tel 01686 670342,
www.claireaustin-hardyplants.co.uk
Iris field open day 2 June 2012.

- **Kelways**
Picts Hill, Langport,
Somerset TA10 9EZ.
Tel 01458 250521,
www.kelways.co.uk

- **Woottens of Wenhaston**
See above for details

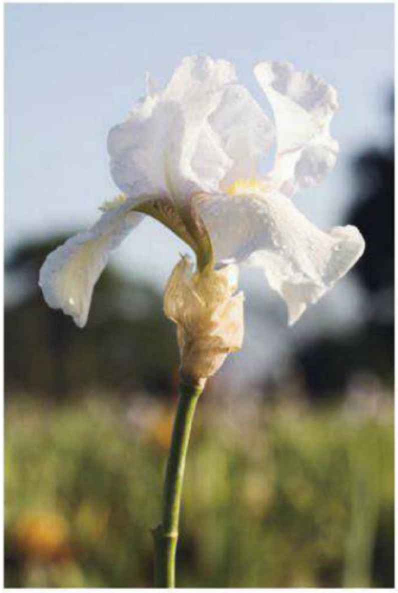
Further reading

Irises: a Gardener's Encyclopedia by Claire Austin (Timber Press,2005)

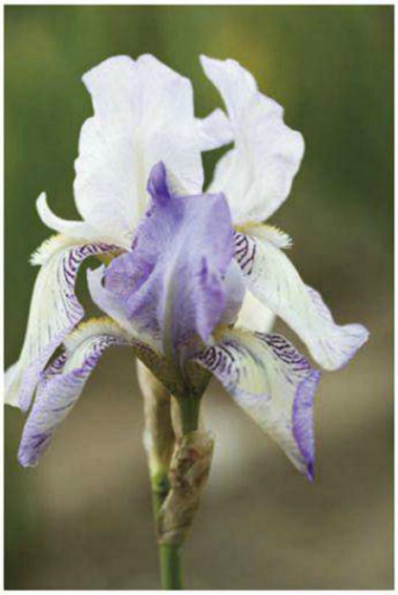
Classic Irises and the Men and Women Who Created Them by Clarence E Mahan (Krieger Publishing Company, 2006)

Acknowledgements

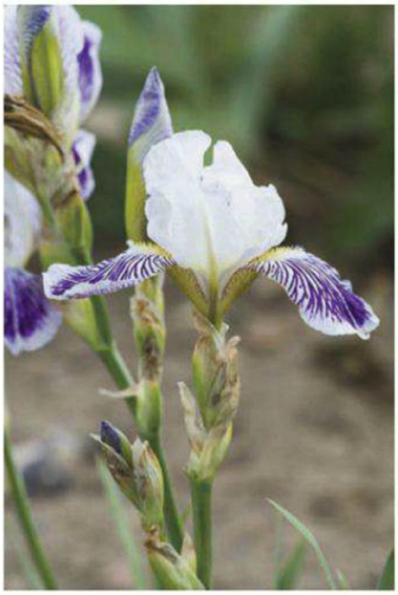
Thanks to Woottens of Wenhaston (see details above) for allowing us to photograph their plants for this feature.



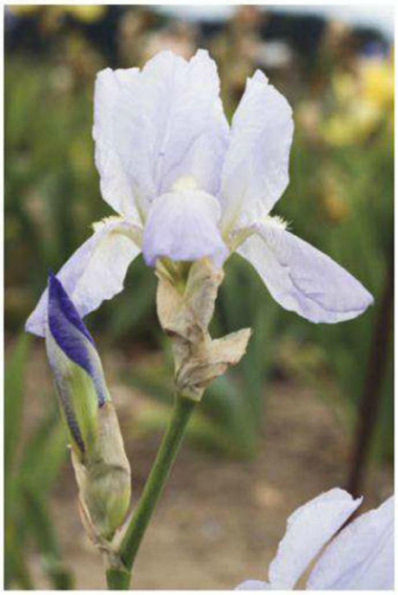
IRIS **'WHITE CITY'**
Introduced in 1939, this is the most perfumed of all white irises, with a perfectly tailored form quite unlike the muddled ruffles of modern cultivars such as 'Skating Party'. H 90cm.



I. **'BRIDESMAID'**
A classic plicata that was introduced in 1859. Unlike the over-heavily patterned, modern plicatas, this cultivar demonstrates an airy restraint. H 60cm.



I. **'AMOENA'**
A classic antique amoena [white or cream standards and coloured falls] introduced in 1812. Compare this to such over-laboured modern amoenas as 'Skylark Song'. H 60cm.



I. **'MAY ALISON'**
A sport of 'Celeste' introduced by Allison in 1920. Unique I believe in having six standards and three falls, instead of the usual three of each. H 76cm.

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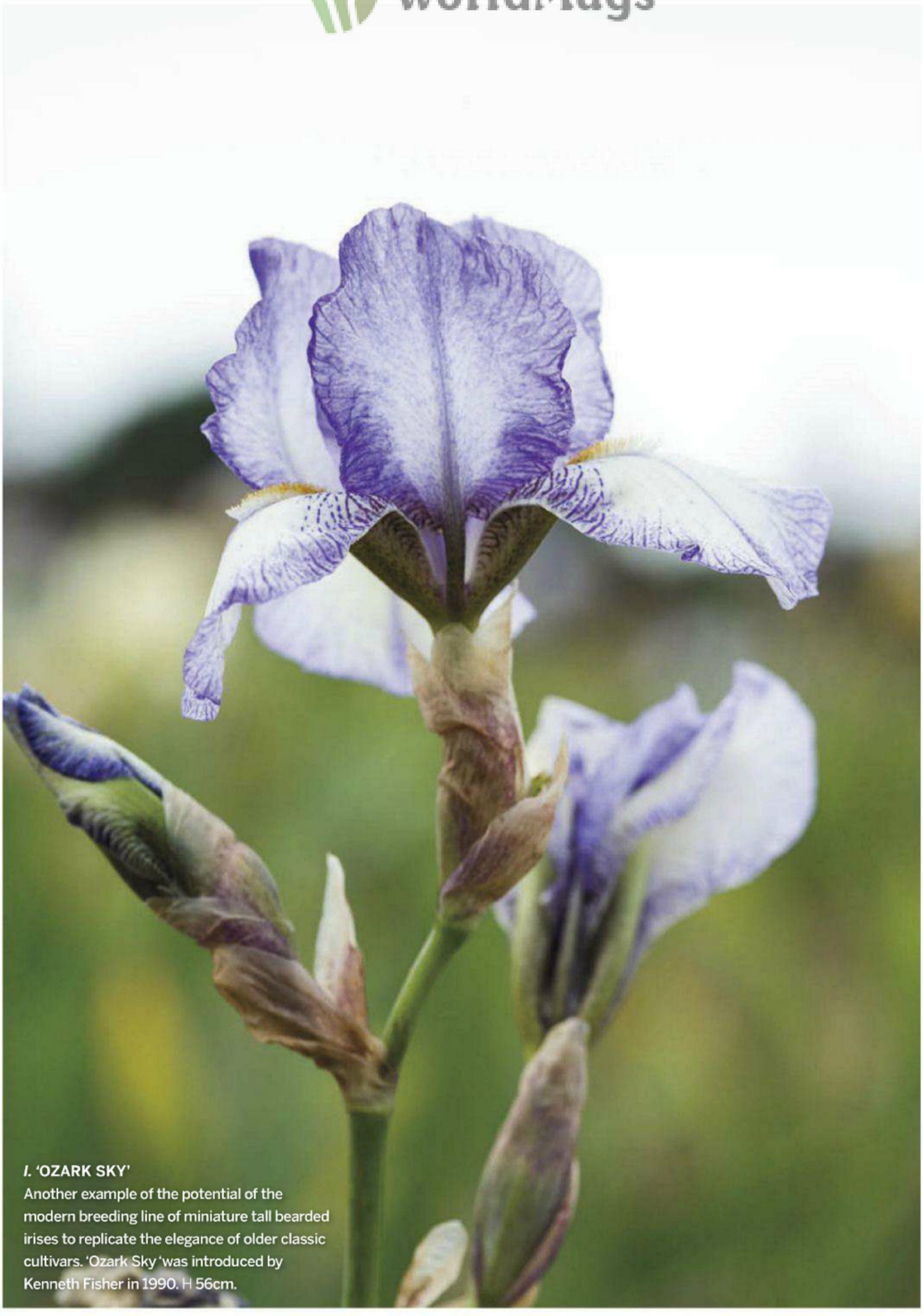


I. 'OZARK SKY'
Another example of the potential of the modern breeding line of miniature tall bearded irises to replicate the elegance of older classic cultivars. 'Ozark Sky 'was introduced by Kenneth Fisher in 1990. H 56cm.

Mark Gregory

As show season begins, spare a thought for those whose job it is to build the high profile show gardens

WORDS **JODIE JONES** PHOTOGRAPH **CHARLIE HOPKINSON**

Mark Gregory was 20 when he first visited Chelsea Flower Show. "I instantly fell in love with it – the old guys in top hats and aprons, the smell of the tent canvas, the excellence of the horticulture."

Today, the tent and the top hats have gone, but Mark still loves Chelsea. "I was back building my first show garden in 1989, at the age of 29, and I've been on site every day the ground has been open for every year since then. In all I've built something like 55 Chelsea gardens (120 RHS show gardens in total). I can't even remember the exact number, but I know it's more than any other living person, and they have all been good."

> *"I always feel that this is the year it'll all go wrong. I still get sick, literally, with nerves"*

His pride is overt but well founded. He has achieved a lot and it has all been the result of his own hard work.

His landscape construction and maintenance company, Landform Consultants, has a multi-million pound turnover and a reputation second to none. He is a director on the board of the Horticultural Trades Association, chairman of the Association of Professional Landscapers and a co-director of the London College of Garden Design (which he set up with designers Andrew Wilson and Andrew Fisher Tomlin). But his only inherited advantage was an almighty work ethic handed down from his grandfather, who had marched from the north east to London on the Jarrow Crusade to protest against poverty in the 1930s Depression.

His father and five uncles were builders. A sixth uncle ran a salad production unit. You couldn't have planned a better training ground for a lad going into garden construction, although at that stage he didn't have a plan of any sort. "My dad sent me to study horticulture at Askham Bryan College, in York, and then I got myself a gap-year place at Wisley because I knew it was the best around. I was surrounded by excellence and I was like a sponge – it was probably the happiest year of my life."

In 1982, fresh out of college he landed his first and only job when he was appointed assistant contracts manager at Squires Landscape Construction. Six months later the manager left and 23-year-old Mark put himself up for promotion. "We had a team of six doing fag-packet sketches for patios and the like. I had no idea about sales forecasts or profitability. I ran it on gut feel, but I put everything into it and it grew into a big, big business with a staff of 30."

In 1989 he struck out on his own. He started trading on April Fools' Day, and by May the same year was building a Chelsea show garden for top designer Robin Williams. "We were a ballsy group. We thought we could conquer the world. I felt – I still feel – that I could achieve anything, given the right backing."

Not that he ever gets complacent. "I always feel that this is the year it'll all go wrong. I still get sick, literally, with nerves. But we plan and prepare. I always make sure I've got a 'get out of gaol free' card, in case things really go wrong."

This year his big challenge is building a dry-stone structure with a self-supporting domed roof, for Nigel Dunnett's modern take on a paradise garden, created with The Landscape Agency for the Royal Bank of Canada. "We considered doing it the easy way, with hidden support, but in the end we've decided to take a risk and do it properly," he says, with a certain glee.

He is, in his own words, an adrenalin junkie. When not building gardens for five-star clients at Chelsea, he is on call for the emergency services, ready to run medical supplies including "blood, breast milk and minor body parts" between hospitals on his motorbike. For relaxation he runs marathons.

"Work hard, play hard is my motto," he says. "And try to give a bit back. That's the other thing about Chelsea – the camaraderie. We have a laugh – I've had a lad sent round to me to ask for a spare bubble for his spirit level! But for the newer teams it can be daunting, so we'll always help out – lend a tool or tell them where to get supplies on a Sunday morning."

"I don't think I'm better than everyone else, but I do think I can be as good as anyone if I work hard enough. That's what I try to instil in my students at the LCGD and the lads on my team at Landform. I'd like to be remembered as someone who wouldn't take no for an answer, who wouldn't lie down, who did everything the best he could." □

- landformconsultants.co.uk

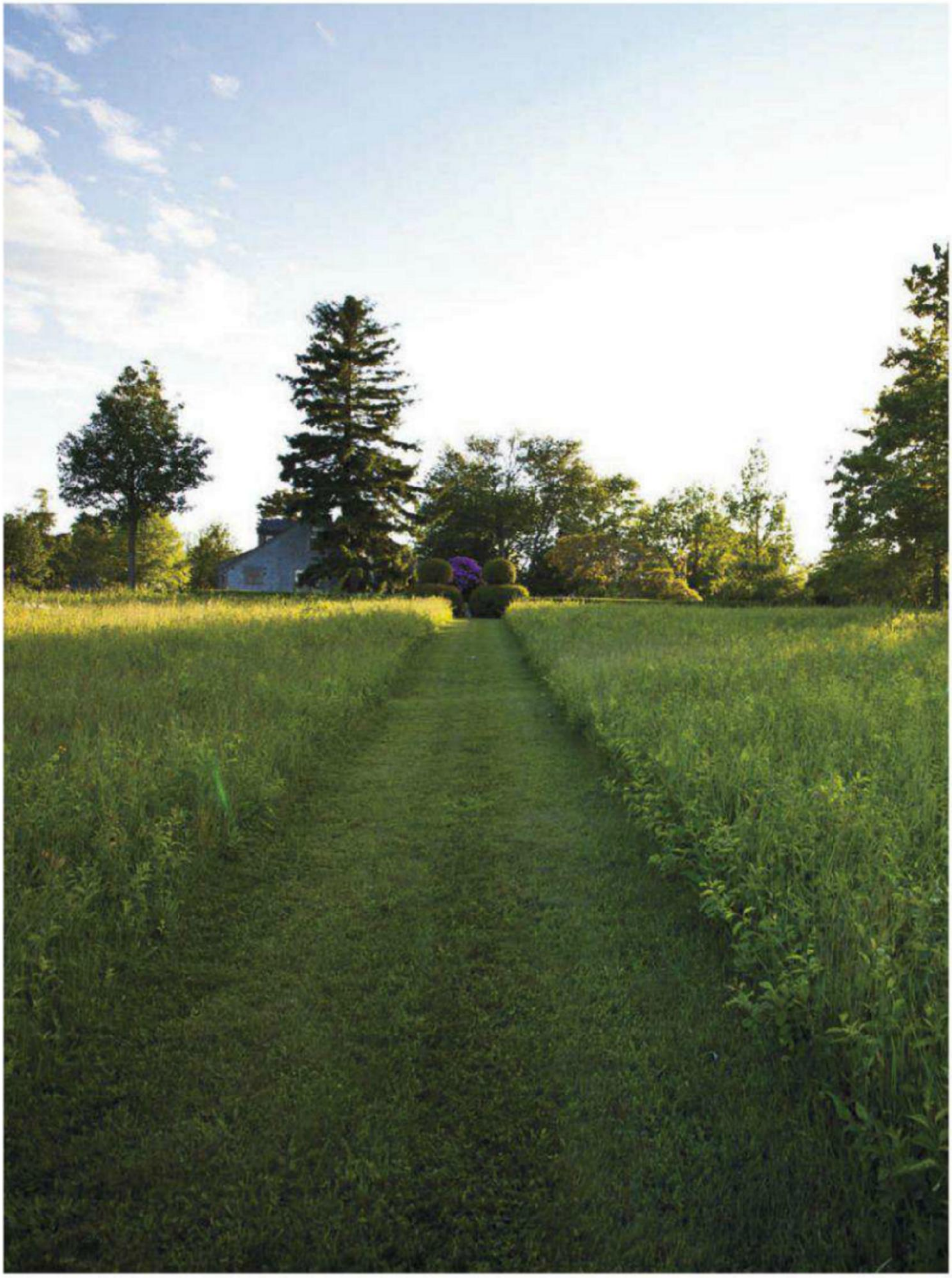
NEXT MONTH Matthew Pottage, garden manager of RHS Wisley.

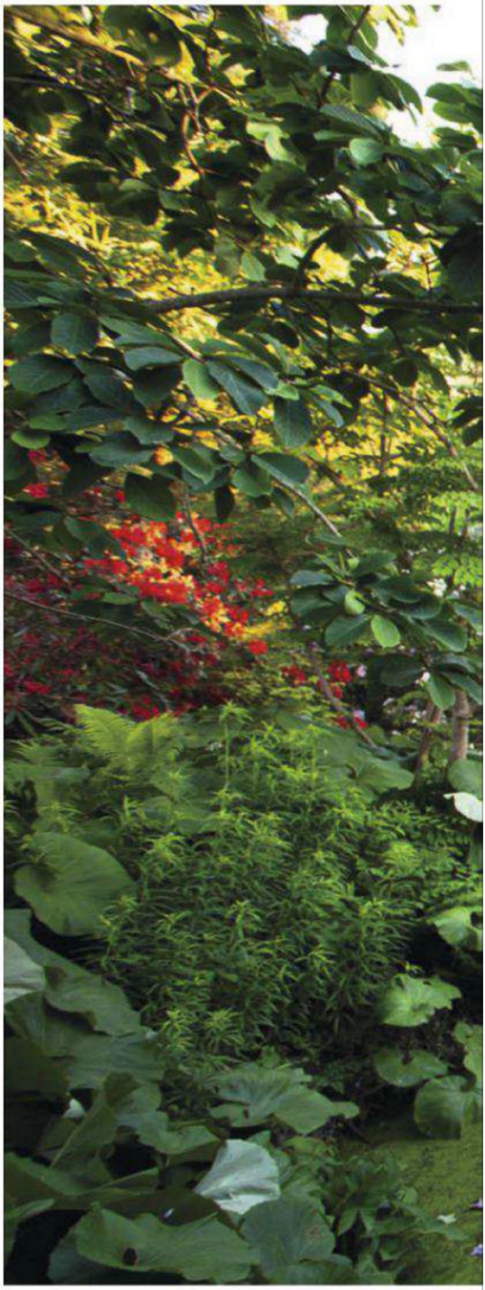
See page 35 for our Chelsea show preview and details of television coverage.

Hidden paths to a secret garden

Sheltered behind tall hedges in Rhode Island, Sakonnet Garden is a labyrinth of intriguing spaces and a microclimate for unusual plants

WORDS **HELEN DILLON** PHOTOGRAPHS **CLAIRE TAKACS**





In brief

NAME Sakonnet Garden, Rhode Island, USA.

WHAT The personal and test garden of landscape architect John Gwynne, working for the last 30 years with his partner, Mikel Folcarelli, an artist and creative director.

WHERE On a peninsula that juts out into the Gulf Stream in coastal New England.

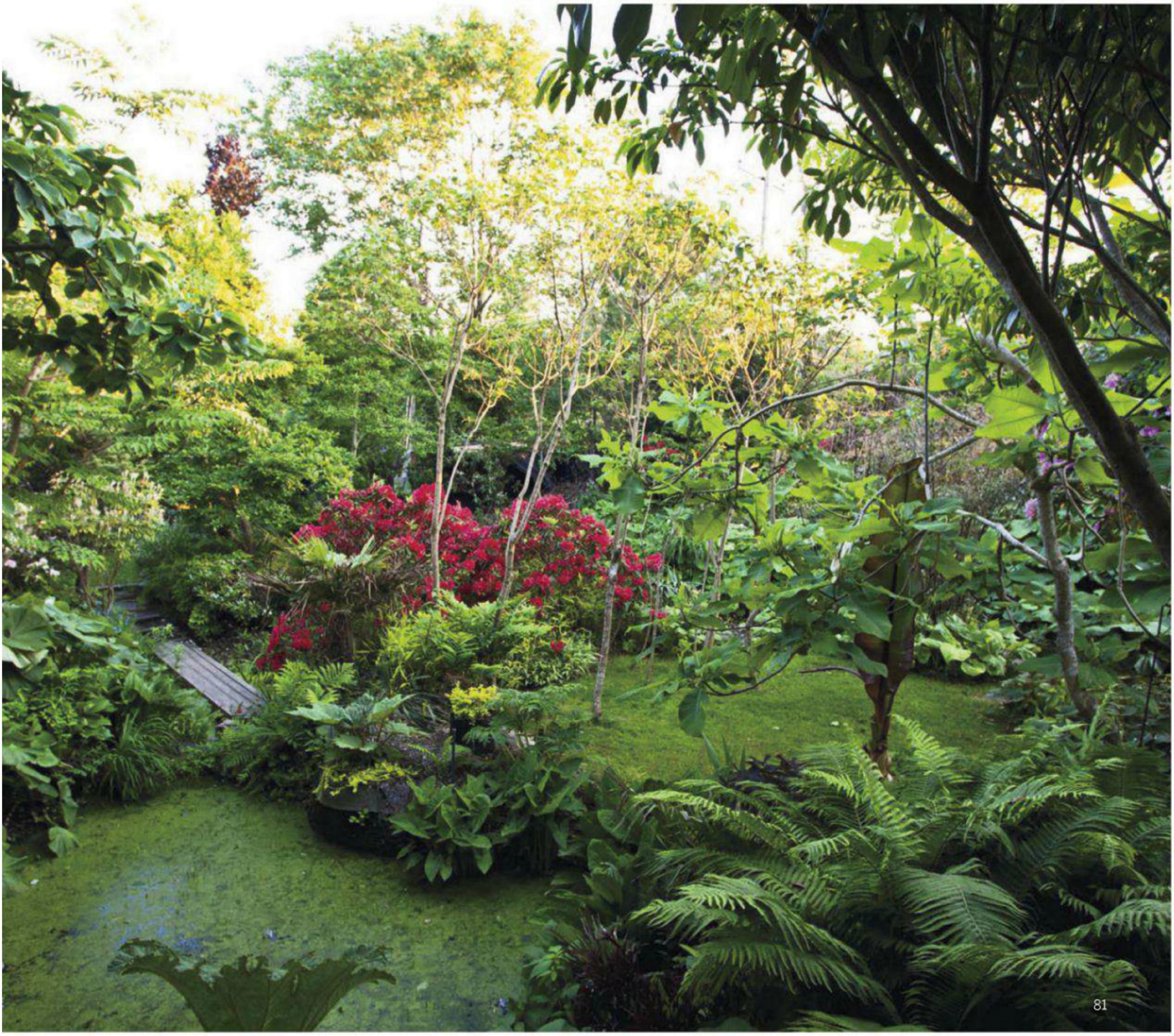
SIZE Just over an acre.

CONDITIONS US Zone 7, with warm winters and relatively cool summers. The hilltop location is vulnerable to hurricanes so the garden has been surrounded by high hedges and stone walls.

SOIL Heavy, acid clay improved over time with sand, manure and composted brush.

LEFT A path mown through a wildflower meadow links the garden with the house.

BELOW By a small pond in the Tropical Quadrant, *Rhodendron* 'Vulcan's Flame' offers a vibrant note amid lush greenery. Trees include *Magnolia* 'Caerhays Belle' (foreground, left) and Japanese evergreen (*Trochodendron aralioides*, right). The large leaves at the pond's edge are those of giant Japanese butterbur (*Petasites japonicus* var. *giganteus*).



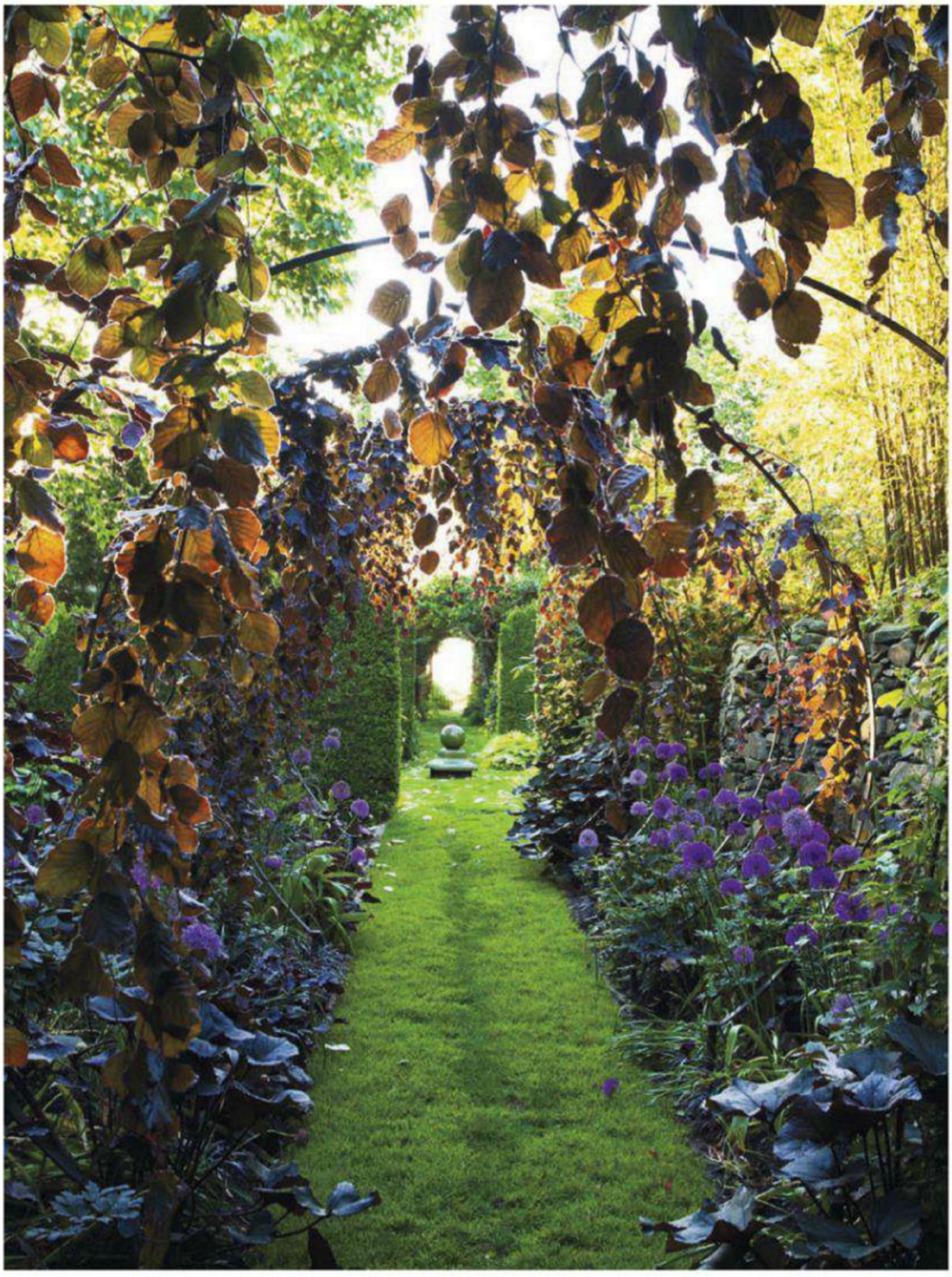
On a sunny day in September, with a small party of gardening friends, I arrived at a charming farmhouse in Rhode Island, surrounded with gently rolling fields. There was no hint of a garden – so much so that I thought we'd arrived at the wrong house. But then, after strolling along paths through meadows, we came upon the entrance to the garden via a narrow moss and fern path, almost a tunnel, between gnarled trunks of local blueberry, their twigs zig-zagging towards you, like fantastical creations from the pen of illustrator Arthur Rackham. Sakonnet Garden, the long-term project of John Gwynne and Mikel Folcarelli, is located quite away from the house, in rural meadow landscape. The garden is set in a thicket of wild viburnum, bittersweet vines and autumn olive. The garden perimeter has been planted with a hedgerow of local plants that, together with interior hedges and high stone walls, have enabled John and Mikel to manipulate the climate. Blue meconopsis thrive – they're impossible to grow in most of the USA. The main path and *Cryptomeria* allée is reached through a keyhole opening in a hedge of Japanese holly (*Ilex crenata)* three metres tall.

"The high stone walls and tall tapestry hedges help us subdivide the garden into a series of discoveries," says Mikel. "Sakonnet was once described as a maze, with paths between rooms that twist and purposefully disorient. We want visitors to be continually surprised and curious about what lies around the next corner – a place for exploring, for fun." For most of the time I was there I had no idea

LEFT In the Black Border, weeping beeches (*Fagus sylvatica* 'Black Swan') turn from coppery to blackish for summer. Several types of purple alliums emerge from the ground cover of *Ligularia* 'Britt Marie Crawford'.

CENTRE The circular Punchbowl is created from rhododendrons in gradients of dark to pale pinks to whites and includes a low white-flowered hybrid called *R.* 'Nestucca' (left); the pink *R.* 'Scintillation' (centre) and a large white hybrid called *R.* 'Caroline' (right). Undersized red chairs exaggerate the scale of the flowers.

RIGHT *Cryptomeria japonica* create a tall *allée,* accentuated by the dark ground cover of wild ginger *(Asarum europeaum)* flanking the boardwalk. *Rhododendron auriculatum* 'Aladdin' is just visible on the right.

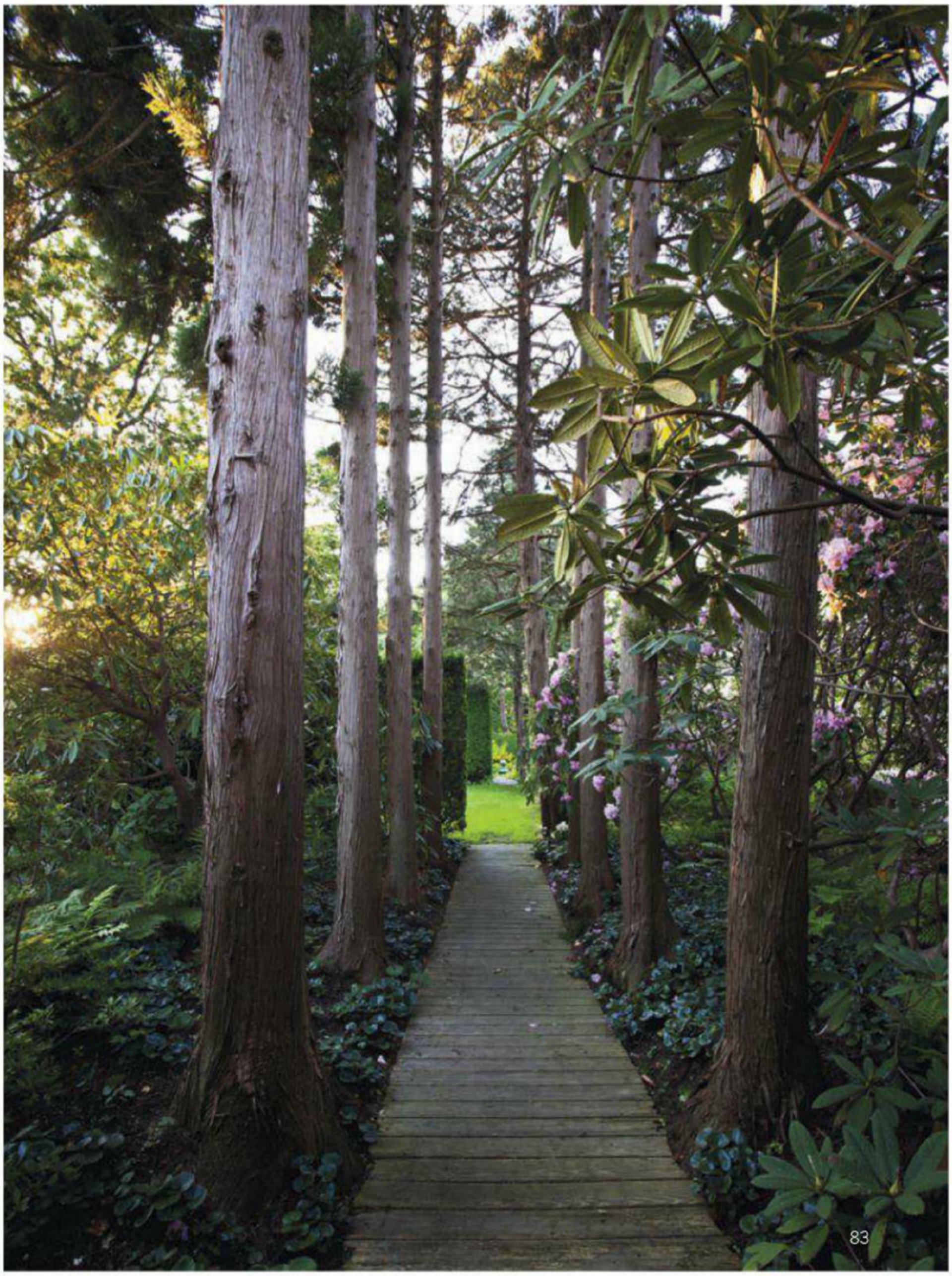


"We want visitors to be continually surprised and curious about what lies around the next corner – a place for exploring, for fun"

which direction I was going in, whether forwards or backwards. With the dizzying effect of too much sun and jet lag I felt I had entered an enchanted wood. It was dreamy. John explains: "Increasingly we are trying to create a three-dimensional experience that one wanders through, rather than a two-dimensional border that one walks by." The garden is clearly separate from the house, keeping its own company, and it lies there waiting to be discovered. John points out that the exotics growing in the garden in no way intrude on the surrounding wilderness of the native coastal fields landscape.

Gardening heritage

What has been the main inspirations for this garden? Both Mikel and John grew up in families passionate about gardening – an Anglo-American heritage that is typical of New England. Then a trip to Hidcote Manor Garden in the Cotswolds in the 1970s proved a revelation, with all the unexpected rooms, each with its distinct planting idea. John's sister, Addie Kurz, has acted as a support gardener since the beginning, while Ed Bowen, proprietor of the nearby Opus Nursery, one of the USA's premier plant nurseries, has helped with everything from moving trees to sage advice. Today, John and Mikel have the relative luxury of being able to enjoy plants put in 30 or more years ago. Although both are trained in design and planning, "this garden grew organically as a place to experiment with ▷

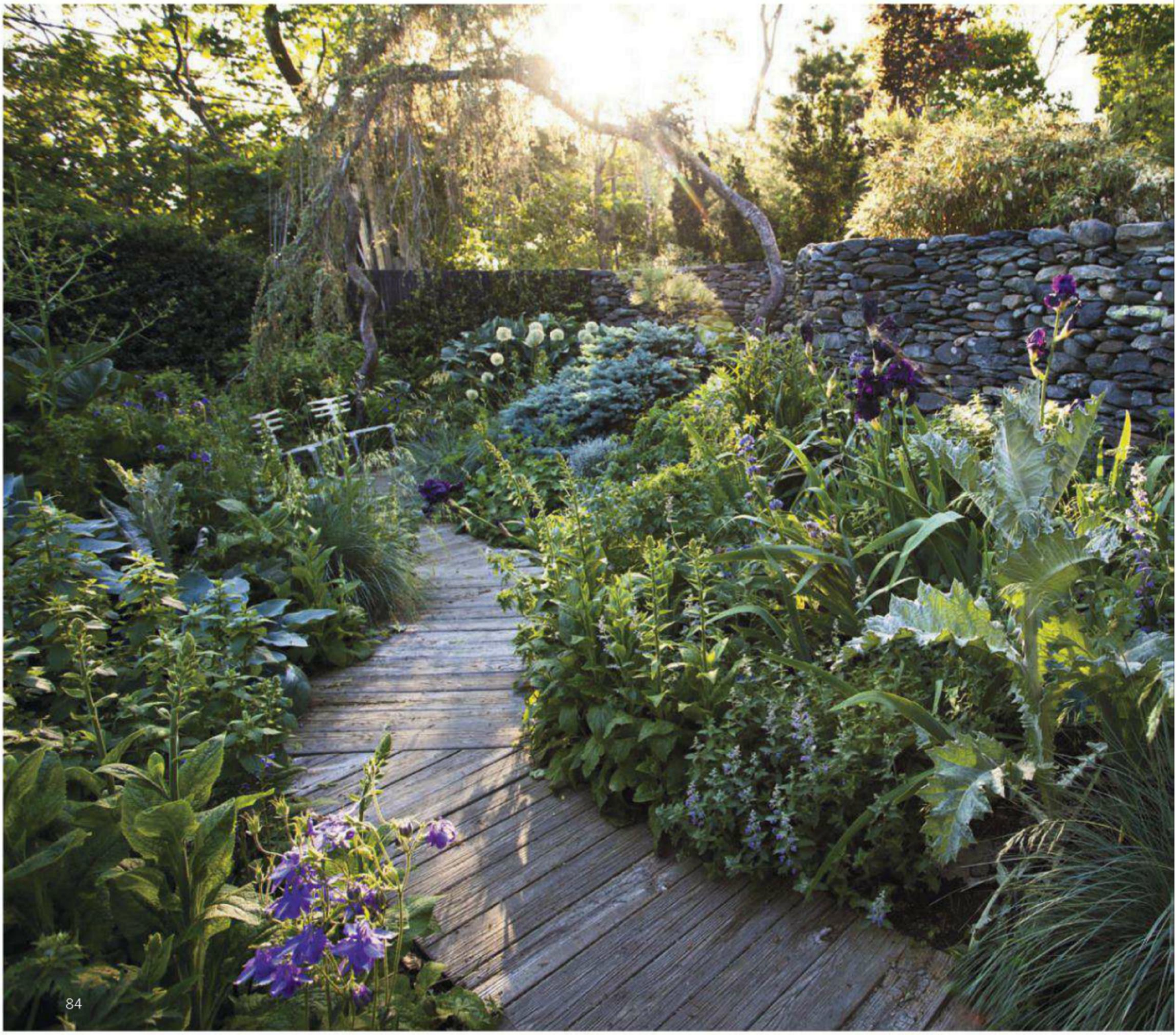


▷ plants we didn't know. Initially it was just a plant collection". But now at Sakonnet each space is so easy to read that it's very obvious what each section is about. Indeed, it's hard to imagine anything further away from 'just a plant collection'.

The ongoing challenge has been how to integrate new plants into a design. To create a stronger, more focused experience, more editing has been taking place in recent years. One or more areas are continually being torn up and rebuilt (much to Mikel's exasperation). "We now look at refinements and are trying to intensify the specific feeling of each garden area. For instance: trying to make the Silver Meadow garden more silver, more diaphanous, shimmery with backlit whites, and finding plants to give this effect; or trying to give the Yellow Garden a more luminous glow," says John.

Tropical discoveries

Some of Mikel and John's early plant experiments included rhododendrons in pure colours and those with huge, sumptuous, fragrant flowers. "We suddenly had a lot of space between and under them," explains John, "so we started collecting woodland wild flowers: including anemone forms, trilliums, rodgersias, ferns, calanthes, arisaemas… thus it began as a spring garden". This in turn led to a love of plant textures. John takes up the story again: "I was involved in conservation projects in Panama,



BELOW In the Silver Garden, weeping cedars (*Cedrus atlantica* 'Glauca Pendula') overhang a bench that faces a large clump of silvery blue *Hosta* 'Krossa Regal'. A path leading to the bench weaves past the silvery cotton thistle *(Onopordum acanthium)* and blue oat grass *(Helictotrichon sempervirens)*. Purple highlights include *Iris* 'Hello Darkness' and an unnamed blue cultivar of *Aquilegia vulgaris*.

> "The garden began with a passion for collecting plants we didn't know, including rhododendrons with huge, sumptuous, fragrant flowers"

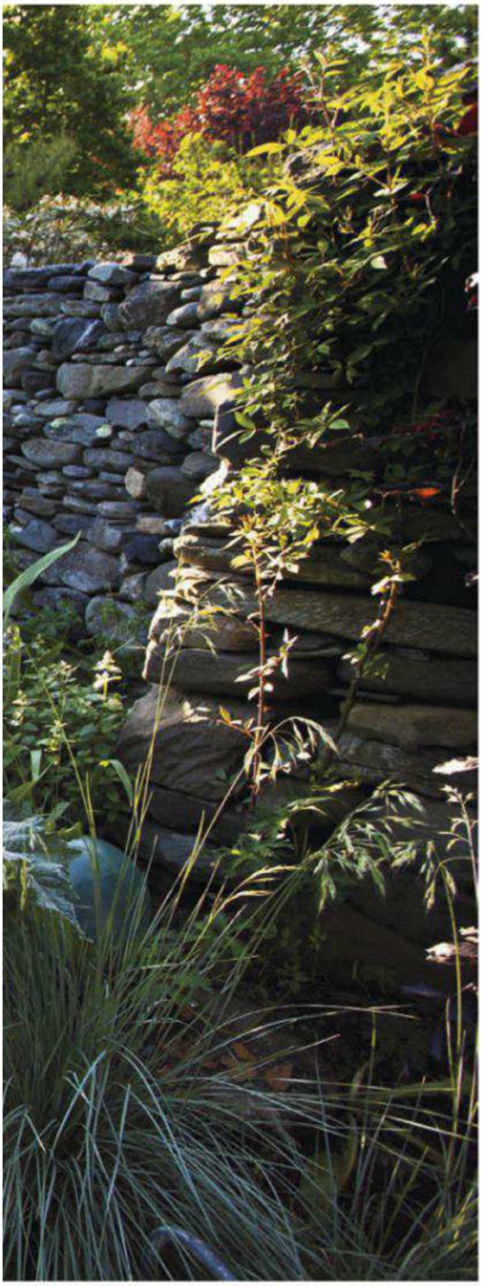
Venezuela and the Gabon rainforest and Mikel and I travelled to the tropics and subtropics. We liked the idea of finding giant-leaved plants, bamboos and plants that grow like lianas or aroids to gather together to create a corner of the garden we call the Tropical Quadrant. We love the giant petasites *(Petasites japonicus* var. *giganteus)* for its immense leaves that knit together other 'tropical' textures."

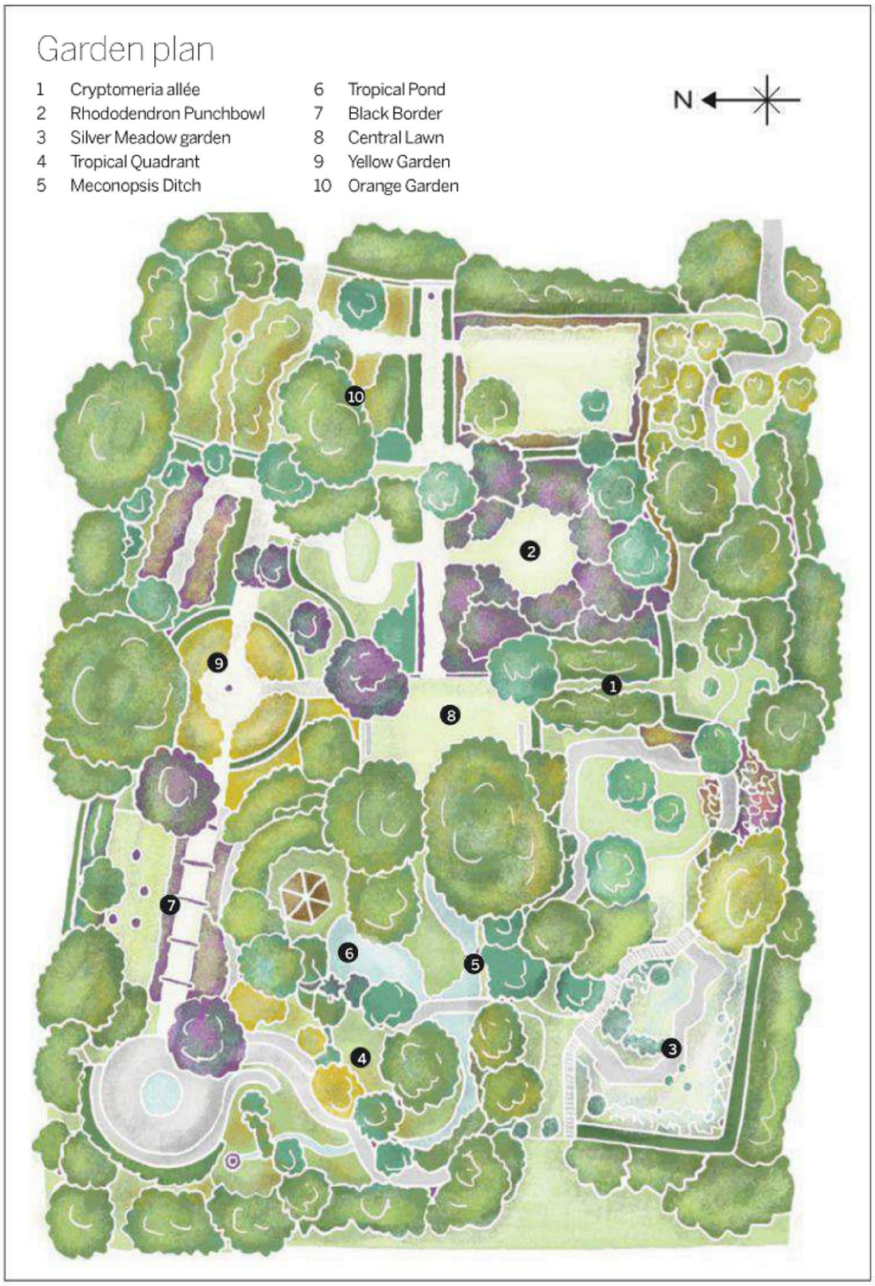
We took a different route back to the house, wandering through a gently undulating and very beautiful meadow. At Sakonnet they are trying to discover how to manage the open fields better and hold on to the biodiversity there, including the wonderful native blue *Iris prismatica.*

What do John and Mikel love most about the garden? John says: "That we created a place that we enjoy." For Mikel: "The garden is about time and a singleness of purpose." To me Sakonnet is a garden that has been discussed for decades, thought about deeply and much loved. It also contains some amazing plants, including the daddy of them all, *Acer saccharum* 'Monumentale' – at 10 metres tall and 30 centimetres wide, it is the sort of plant that keeps me awake at night. ☐

USEFUL INFORMATION

OPEN The garden will be open 2-3 June for Spring Open Days and 9 June for a US Garden Conservancy benefit day. See website for details. WEBSITE www.sakonnetgarden.com





Garden plan

1 Cryptomeria allée
2 Rhododendron Punchbowl
3 Silver Meadow garden
4 Tropical Quadrant
5 Meconopsis Ditch
6 Tropical Pond
7 Black Border
8 Central Lawn
9 Yellow Garden
10 Orange Garden

PLAN BY HANNAH MCVICAR

9 of Mikel and John's favourite plants

1 ***Iris prismatica***
This is native to the Eastern USA. "It is wonderful grown next to sensitive ferns *(Onoclea sensibilis)*," says John.

2 ***Calanthe discolor***
"Japanese woodland orchids are good doers here and easy to divide but beware slugs."

3 ***Petasites japonicus* var. *giganteus***
"Most people hate petasites, but I love its huge leaves running about, knitting all the subtropical leaves together."

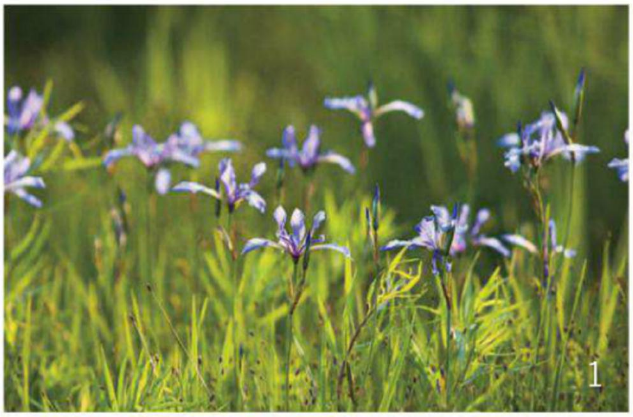
4 ***Fagus sylvatica* 'Black Swan'**
A wonderful coppery colour in May and June before it turns black for early summer.

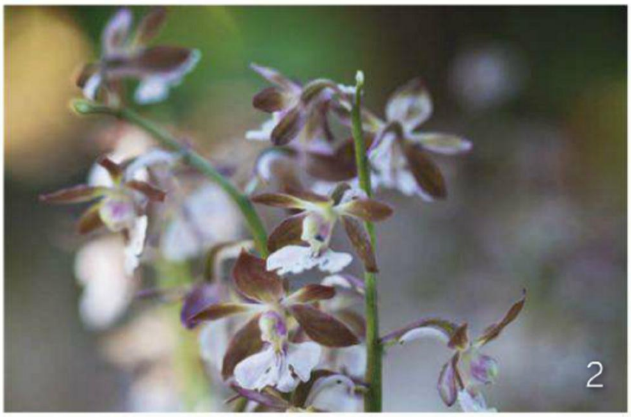
5 ***Rhododendron yakushimanum***
In order to form a nice compact plant, this is clipped hard every spring to encourage the growth of beautiful new silvery grey leaves after a month's rest and regular watering.

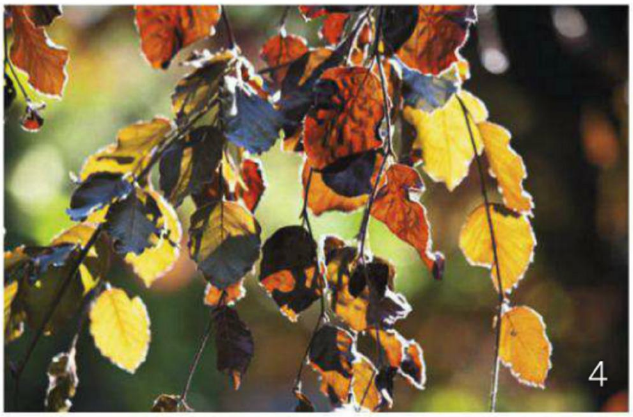
6 ***Fallopia japonica* var. *compacta* 'Milkboy'**
"This is growing in an old recycled concrete tube and cannot escape," says John.

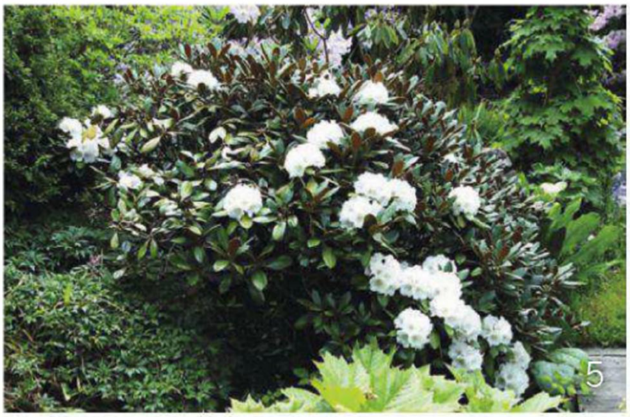
7 ***Rhododendron* 'Sappho'**
"An old hybrid, I love its purple eye – nice with native local cranesbill *Geranium maculatum*."

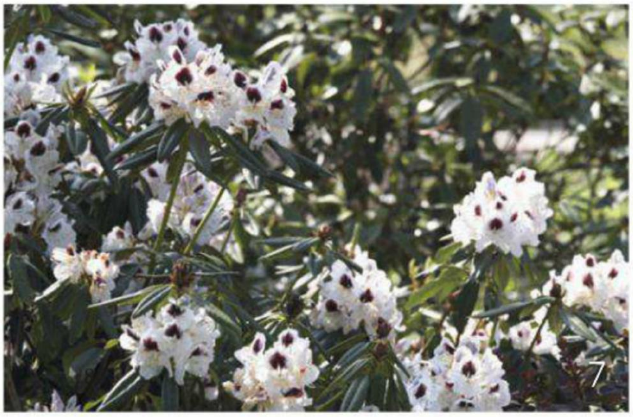
8 ***Corydalis flexuosa* 'Rainier Blue'**
Has better longevity than 'Blue Panda' and is the same killer blue,

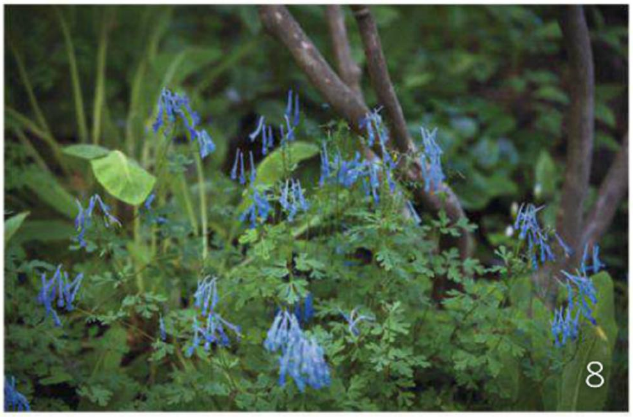












grown in this garden with blue *Meconopsis* 'Lingholm' for same colour mix.

9 ***Arisaema consanguineum***
"This seeds itself around, here with the broader leaves of *A. ringens.*"

FAR LEFT Sakonnet Garden is the long-term project of John Gwynne (on the left) and Mikel Folcarelli.

BELOW The Orange Garden has a succession of salmony flowers, from orange tulips through salmony rhododendrons to alstroemerias. All look wonderful with the exfoliating orange bark of these paperbark maples (*Acer griseum*) from China. The gate excludes deer and leads to wild meadows.

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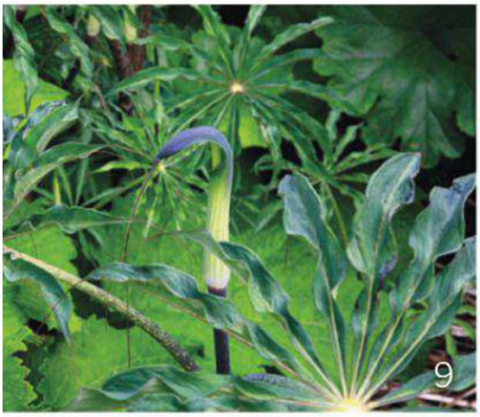
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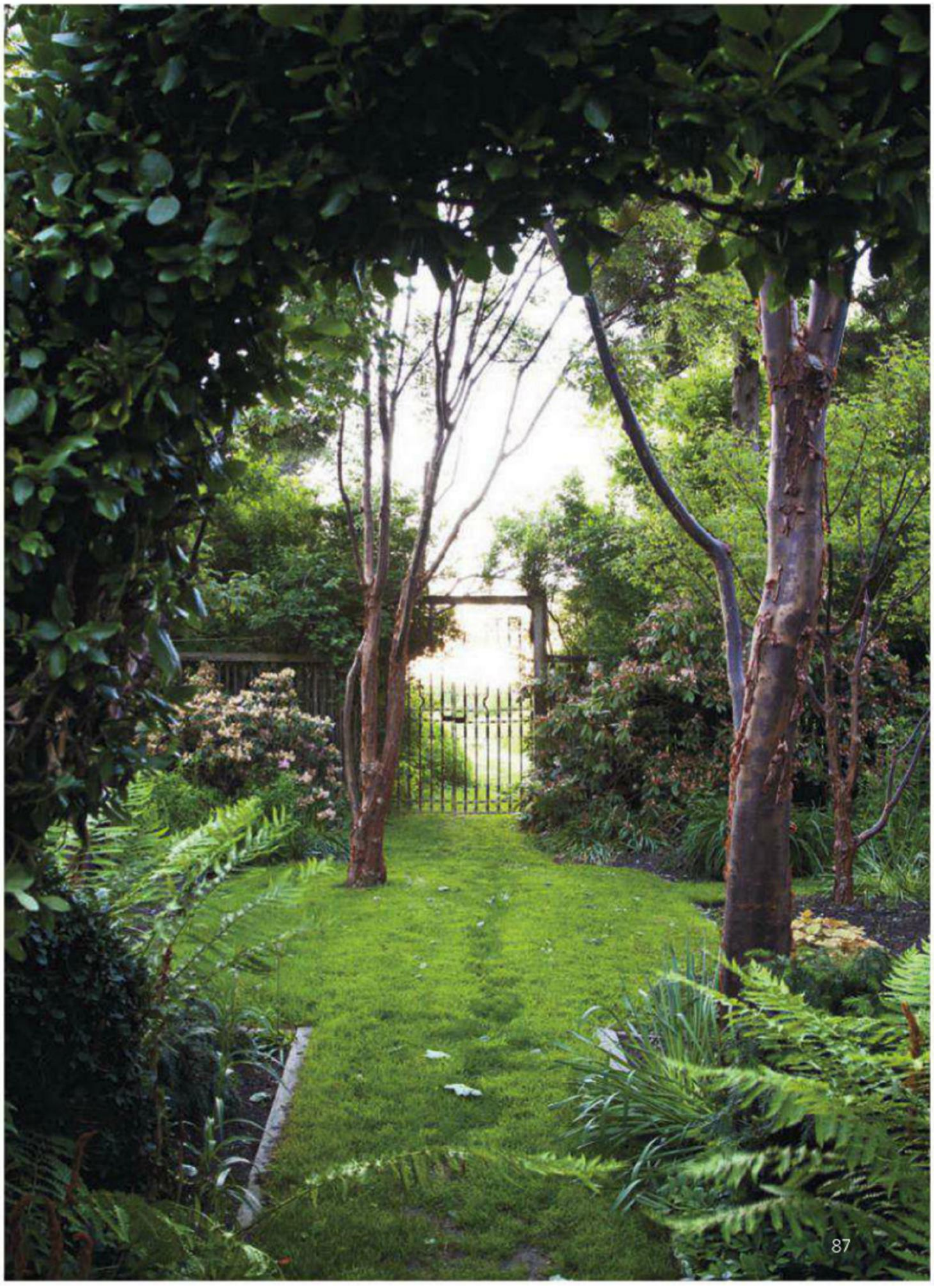
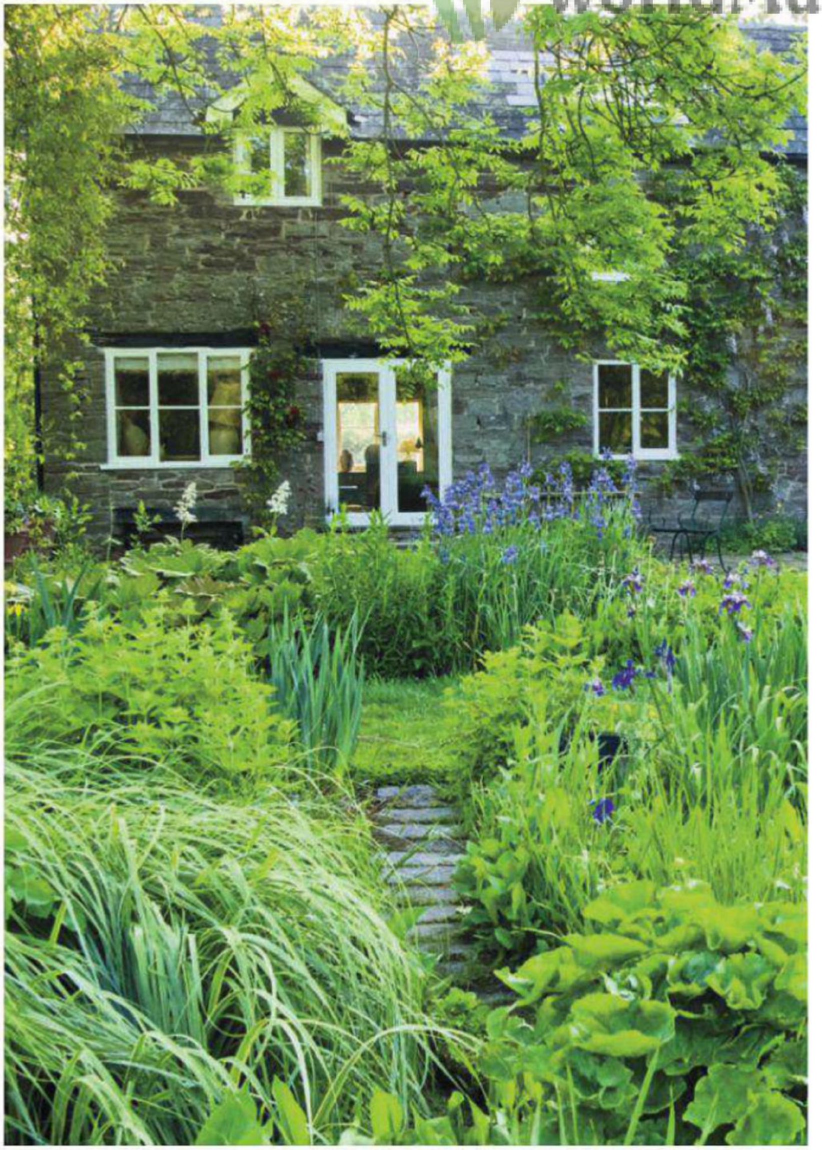
7 VISIONS / GAP PHOTOS; 9 CUBOIMAGES SRL / ALAMY



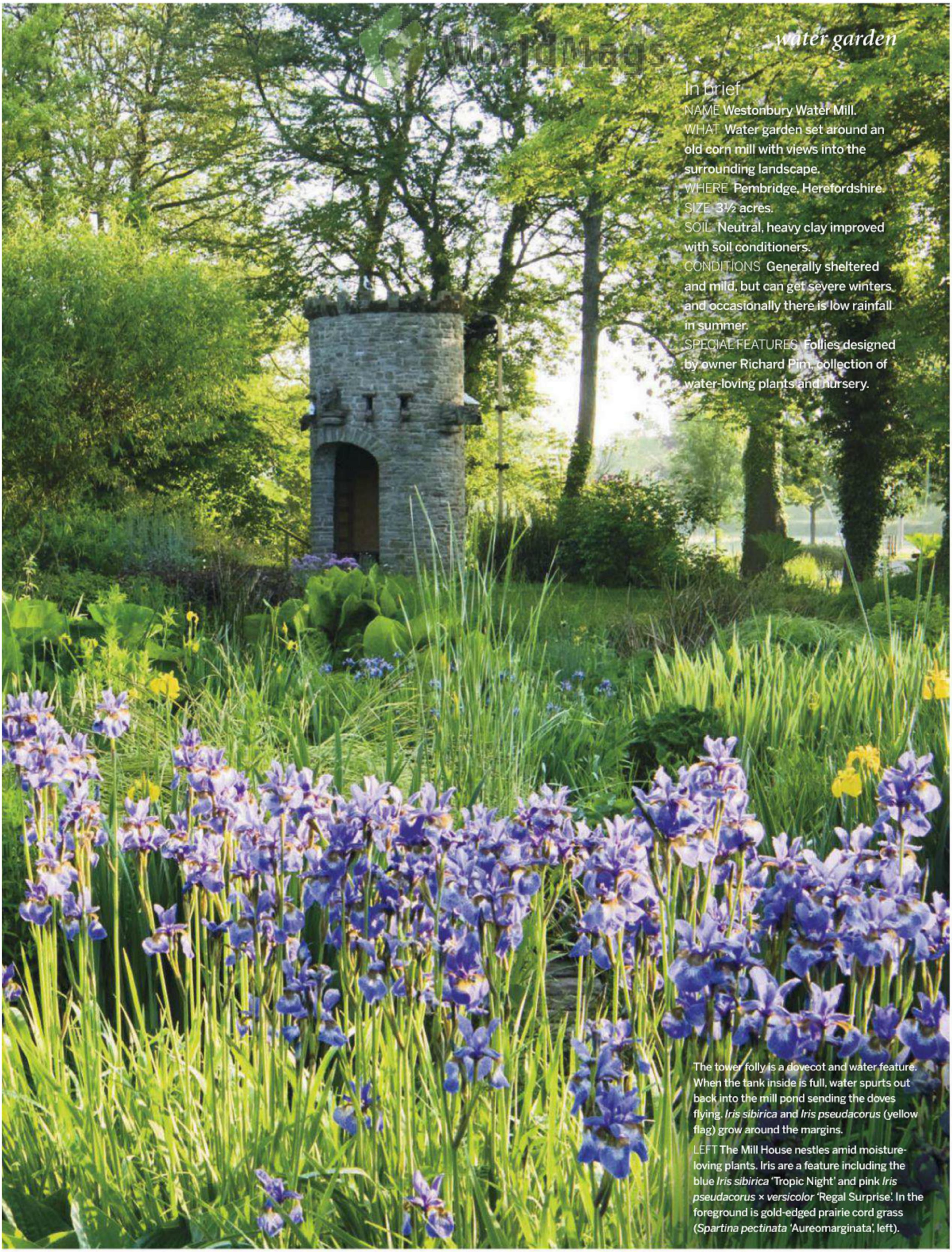


Oasis
a watery wonderland

Richard Pim spent years working in arid countries. Now he has created a tranquil garden from an old watermill and filled it with ponds, streams and moisture-loving plants

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHS CAROLE DRAKE

WorldMags



In brief

NAME **Westonbury Water Mill.**

WHAT **Water garden set around an old corn mill with views into the surrounding landscape.**

WHERE **Pembridge, Herefordshire.**

SIZE **3½ acres.**

SOIL **Neutral, heavy clay improved with soil conditioners.**

CONDITIONS **Generally sheltered and mild, but can get severe winters and occasionally there is low rainfall in summer.**

SPECIAL FEATURES **Follies designed by owner Richard Pim, collection of water-loving plants and nursery.**

The tower folly is a dovecot and water feature. When the tank inside is full, water spurts out back into the mill pond sending the doves flying. *Iris sibirica* and *Iris pseudacorus* (yellow flag) grow around the margins.

LEFT The Mill House nestles amid moisture-loving plants. Iris are a feature including the blue *Iris sibirica* 'Tropic Night' and pink *Iris pseudacorus* × *versicolor* 'Regal Surprise'. In the foreground is gold-edged prairie cord grass (*Spartina pectinata* 'Aureomarginata', left).

The fertile farm land of northwest Herefordshire, dotted with small woods and orchards and intersected by streams, is a world away from the barren places in which Richard Pim spent his working life as a hydro-geologist, bringing water to arid landscapes. In the 1960s he wrote from the Libyan desert to a friend, with a postscript saying: 'If you ever find a water meadow, with a brook and an old mill, buy it for me.'

In 1969 the friend did just that, though it was 1997 before Richard moved in to the old corn mill near Pembridge, a few miles from the Welsh border. He married in 2007 and now lives at Westonbury with his wife Sally, but in the early days it was a solo project.

The garden was an impenetrable tangle and the mill pond, leat and streams were full of silt, so a mini-digger was used to clear the site. "We made some bad mistakes," recalls Richard, "like getting subsoil and topsoil muddled up which needed a lot of fork and shovel work to sort out – I certainly learnt about some things the hard way." But even when the garden was a "clay quagmire", he intended to open to the public. "People thought I was a lunatic, but I was always confident this was a good place for a garden."

Into the existing structure of streams and trees Richard introduced another large pond and two boggy areas crisscrossed with walkways, one area gently blending into the next, allowing long views out into the surrounding landscape. "Keeping the boundaries open is a wonderful way of extending the garden," explains Richard.

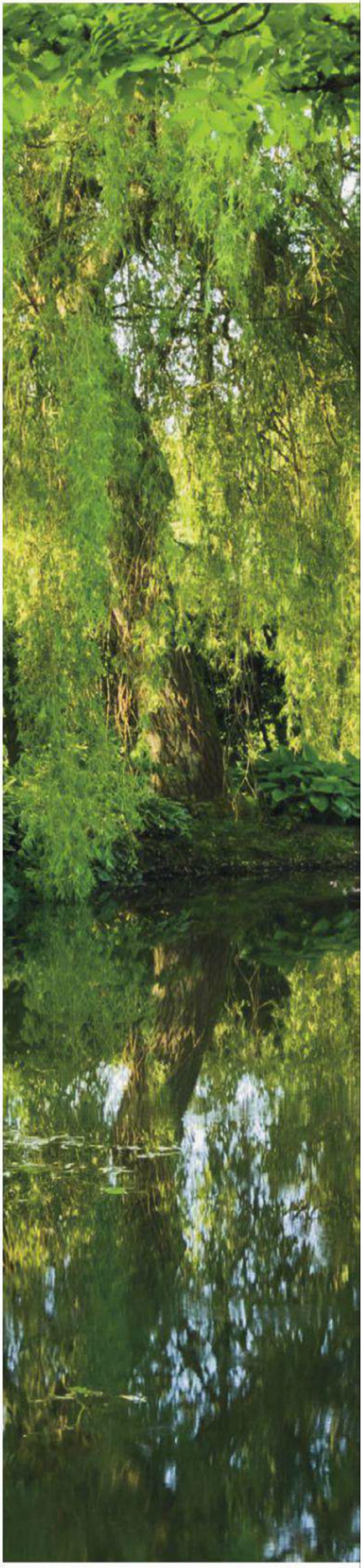
Richard's previous experience of horticulture amounted to "growing rice, wheat and alfalfa in the desert", so he ordered one of everything from a nursery selling plants for watery conditions and waited to see what happened, learning by trial and error. The garden is now packed with water lovers, from familiar staples such as yellow flag iris, towering gunnera and intricate candelabra primulas to rarities such as *Senecio smithii* bearing clusters of white daisies above coarse grey-green leaves, and *Butomus umbellatus*, a graceful flowering rush with loose heads of pale pink flowers.

Intense colours

In May the garden is a sea of fresh new foliage spattered with pools of intense flower colour: blue irises, pink candelabra primulas, deep red cirsium and tangy orange trollius. Many water and bog plants sport distinctive foliage too: *Lysichiton americanus*, American skunk cabbage, has large, smooth chicory shaped leaves; *Rodgersia podophylla*'s leaves are coarsely textured, horse chestnut-shaped and tinted pink; *Schonoplectus lacustris* subsp. *tabernaemontani* 'Zebrinus' has narrow grass-like stripy foliage; while king of the bog, *Gunnera manicata*, boasts massive umbrella-like leaves supported on thick prickly stems. "I love the fact that by July one can walk through a grove of gunnera and the leaves tower overhead. It's spectacular," Richard exclaims.

Westonbury is also a mecca for connoisseurs of quirky buildings, as a ▷

> *"By July one can walk through a grove of gunnera and the leaves tower overhead. It's spectacular"*



Swathes of sky-blue *Iris sibirica* 'Perry's Blue', yellow *Geum* 'Farmer John Cross' and delicate pink ragged robin *(Lychnis flos-cuculi)* run down to the water's edge, overhung by a large weeping willow *(Salix sepulcralis* var. *chrysocoma)*.

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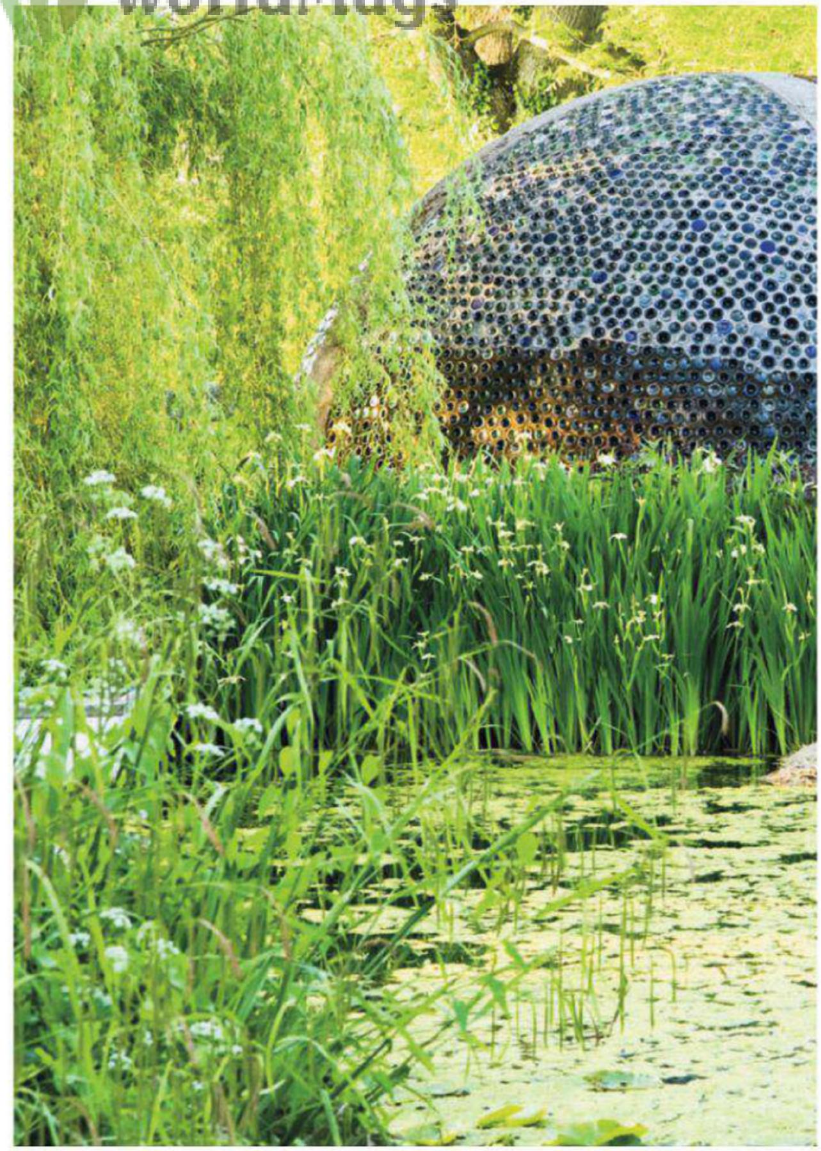
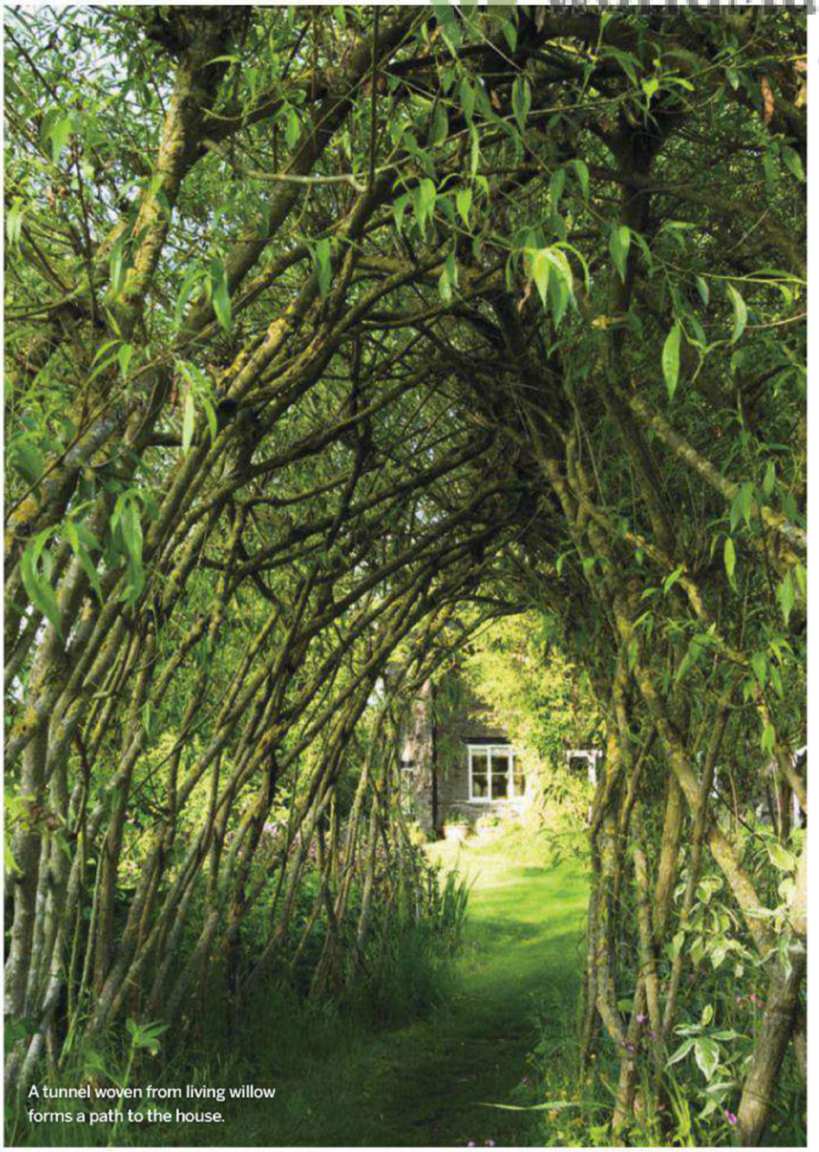


"The second folly took Richard five years and thousands of wine bottles to build. There is a glorious stained-glass effect inside when the sun shines through its vitreous walls"

Richard's latest folly is an oak viewing platform housing a water-powered clock. Growing in the water is the tall reedmace *Typha angustifolia*, red campion and *Iris sibirica* 'Tropic Night' growing in the margins.

ABOVE A clump of *Iris pseudacorus* var. *bastardii* grows at the edge of pond in front of a domed folly made from thousands of wine bottles.



A tunnel woven from living willow forms a path to the house.

▷ recent visit from heritage charity The Folly Fellowship demonstrates. "I think gardens should have fun in them," declares Richard, who is building his third folly, a water-powered clock in an oak viewing platform. His first was a dovecot and water feature. "It drives a belt fitted with metal buckets that scoop water into a tank at the top, like irrigation systems that have been used in the Middle East for centuries." When the tank is full the water spurts out back into the millpond, sending the resident doves "flying around in beautiful formations".

The second folly took Richard five years and thousands of wine bottles to build. The dome provides a shady grotto for ferns and there is a glorious stained-glass effect inside when the sun shines through its vitreous walls.

Asked what he loves most about the garden Richard replies without hesitation: "It's still what I loved when I first came here, the views, the hills, the meadows and the streams. It's the place itself." □

USEFUL INFORMATION

ADDRESS Westonbury Mill Water Gardens, Pembridge, Herefordshire HR6 9HZ.
TEL 01544 388650
WEBSITE www.westonburymillwatergardens.com
OPEN Daily 1 April to 30 September.

9 of the plants enjoyed by Richard Pim

As a hydro-geologist, Richard worked abroad for much of his career. He has spent the last 25 years creating Westonbury Garden.

1 ***Carex elata* 'Aurea' (Bowles' golden sedge)**
Dense clumps of arching, striped golden foliage with black flower heads.

2 ***Primula bulleyana***
"A must for any garden with moisture," says Richard, with tiered whorls of flowers above rosettes of crinkly leaves.

3 ***Iris sibirica* 'Perry's Blue'**
"I have used irises throughout the garden – this one has exquisite sky-blue flowers with white markings," Richard says.

4 ***Osmunda regalis* (royal fern)**
Large deciduous fern forming dense mounds of pale green foliage. In spring new fronds are covered with a rusty coloured down.

5 ***Geum* 'Karlskaer'**
Masses of bell-shaped, upward-facing, deep yellow-orange flowers on dark wiry stems throughout summer.

6 ***Cirsium rivulare* 'Atropurpureum'**
Richard likes the deep ruby red pincushion-like flower heads, which are carried above shiny dark green leaves.

7 ***Euphorbia griffithii* 'Fireglow'**
Dramatic bushy spurge with mid green foliage on red stems. Small yellow flowers are surrounded by striking pink and orange bracts.

8 ***Iris pseudacorus***
Native flag iris with intensely yellow flowers, suitable for water up to 25cm deep. "Can become invasive so use with care only in large ponds," warns Richard.

9 ***Gunnera manicata***
"Simply spectacular giant rhubarb with umbrella-like leaves", sometimes reaching 1.8m across.

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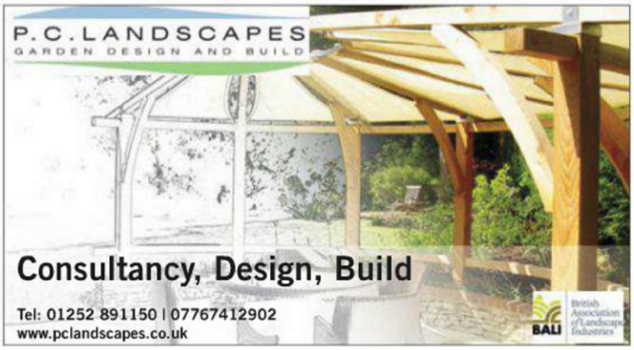

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design

Latest design news, design ideas

Olivier Grossetête's *Unattainable Bridge* is one of the installations at the Tatton Park Biennial of contemporary art. Further details on page 99.

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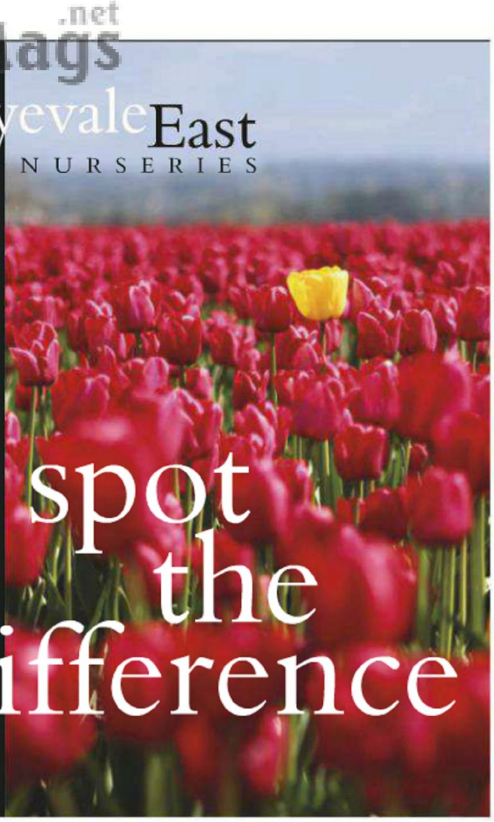

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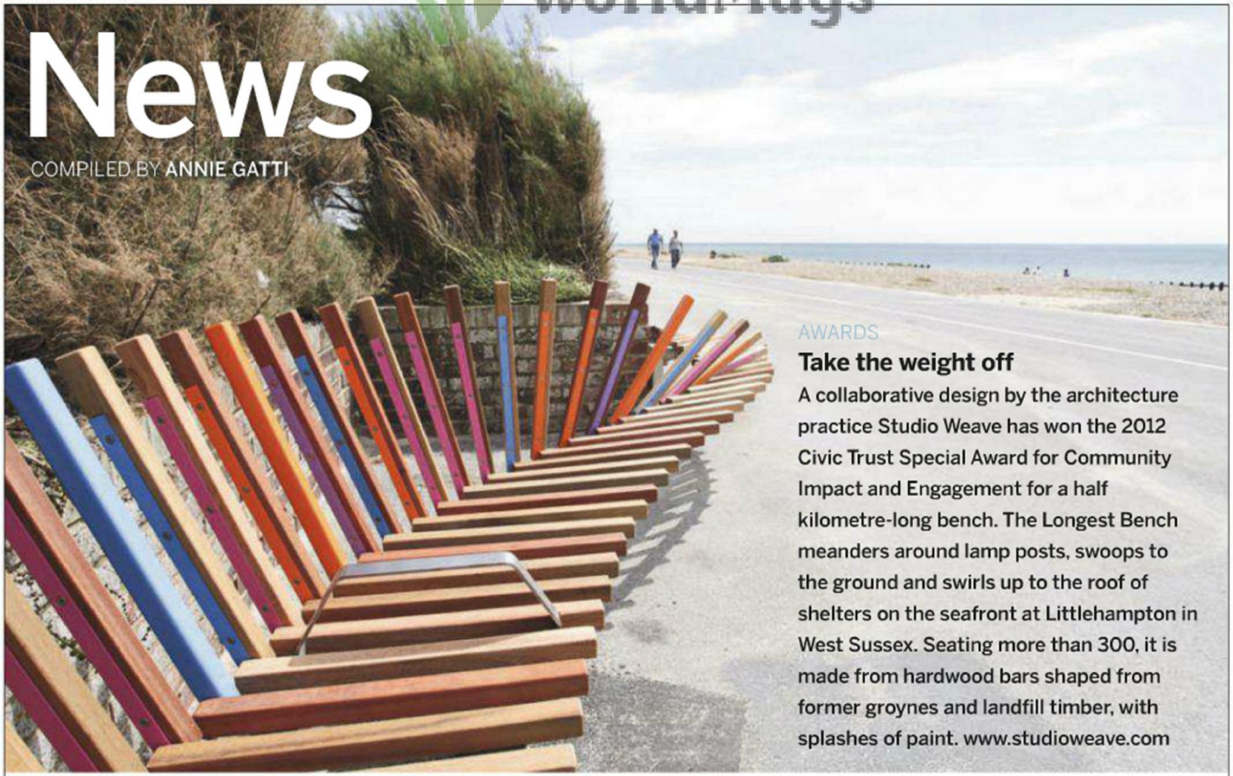

AWARDS

Take the weight off

A collaborative design by the architecture practice Studio Weave has won the 2012 Civic Trust Special Award for Community Impact and Engagement for a half kilometre-long bench. The Longest Bench meanders around lamp posts, swoops to the ground and swirls up to the roof of shelters on the seafront at Littlehampton in West Sussex. Seating more than 300, it is made from hardwood bars shaped from former groynes and landfill timber, with splashes of paint. www.studioweave.com

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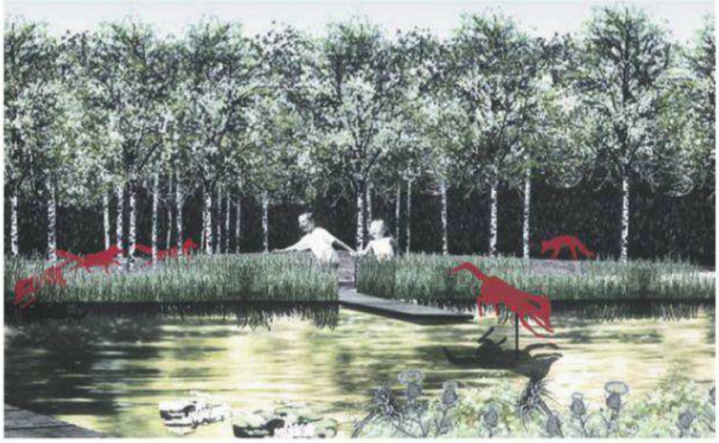


GARDEN FESTIVALS

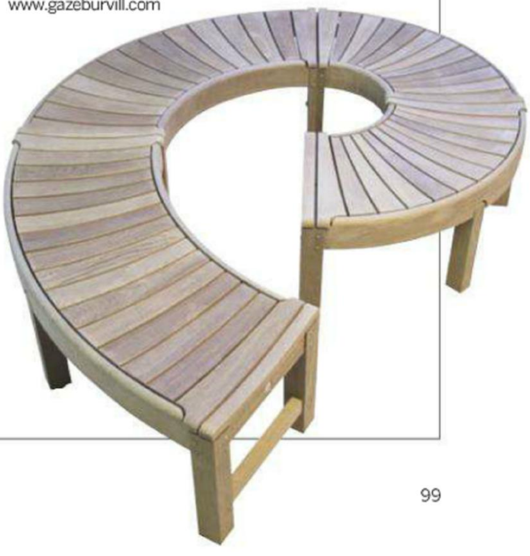
Chaumont-sur-Loire

Les Prés du Goualoup is a new 10-hectare extension, landscaped by Louis Benech, to the 22-hectare International Garden Festival at Domaine de Chaumont-sur-Loire, France. It will be the site of several permanent gardens, the first of which, a Chinese-inspired garden by Che Bing Chiu, is open for the 21st edition of the festival (25 April to 21 October). The theme for this year's temporary gardens at the show is 'Gardens of Delight, Gardens of Delirium'. *The Foxes in the Garden* (above) by Susan Frye, Katya Crawford and Veree Parker Simons from the University of New Mexico uses two-dimensional foxes glimpsed on the far side of a tranquil lily pond. Another of the gardens by French duo Guillaume Vigan and Alexandre Granger explores sensual delight with a design that features a four poster bed surrounded by red roses, reached through an orchard of closely planted trees. Further details at www.domaine-chaumont.fr

TREAT YOUR TREE

This spiral tree seat, hand made from oak by Gaze Burvill and on show for the first time at the Chelsea Flower Show, provides a comfortable and timeless place to sit in the shade of a small tree or an elegant focal point in any landscape design.

The Jubilee Spiral, made to order, £8,580; 228cm at its longest point, 177cm at its deepest. Tel 01420 588444; www.gazeburvill.com



The Messenger is one of the sculptures at the Tatton Park Biennial.

CONTEMPORARY ART

History inspires flights of fancy

The passion for aviation held by Maurice Egerton (last Baron of Tatton) and the role of Tatton Park as a training drop zone for troops during the Second World War have inspired artists taking part in its third biennial of contemporary art, Flights of Fancy. Large-scale installations and artworks have been created in the grounds, gardens and mansions. Olivier Grossetête's *Unattainable Bridge* (see page 97), which does not reach the banks, is held aloft by large helium balloons, while Brass Art's *The Messenger* (pictured above) is a four-metre-long balloon in the shape of a winged head placed in the Formal Gardens. Flights of Fancy runs 12 May to 30 September. www.tattonparkbiennial.org

EXHIBITION

Out of the ordinary

The first exhibition of the work of Thomas Heatherwick – whose studio's work ranges from architecture, engineering, transport and urban planning to furniture, sculpture and product design – takes place at London's V&A Museum this month. With film and audio as well as maquettes and photographs, it gives an insight into the studio's design processes. Among the 150 objects on show will be one of the seed-tipped rods from the UK Pavilion at Shanghai World Expo for which the studio won the RIBA Lubetkin Prize in 2010. Heatherwick Studio: Designing the Extraordinary, sponsored by Ernest & Young, runs 31 May to 30 September. www.vam.ac.uk

RESTORATION

A new welcome to Stowe

Since the National Trust took custodianship of the gardens at Stowe in the 1990s, the entrance has been at the north-east, effectively the back door. After a £9-million restoration of the 18th-century New Inn, visitors once more arrive at the inn on the south side of the house and enter the garden through Bell Gate, as originally intended. There is a café in a rebuilt barn and a vegetable plot has been reinstated, designed by local student Sarah Ward and planted by volunteers and staff. www.nationaltrust.org.uk/stowe

Notebook

- **The ninth Jardins, Jardin,** an event celebrating garden design and outdoor living at the Tuileries gardens, Paris, will feature some 20 gardens and courtyards as well as talks and workshops. 1-3 June, www.jardinsjardin.com
- **Book now for a weekend residential course** on the principles and design of Sacred Gardens led by Emma Clark, specialist in Islamic gardens. The course is held at the Mill Retreat Centre, Breteuil, Normandy (www.millretreatcentre.com) from 7–10 September. The cost is £500 including full board and lodging. Contact info@emma-clark.com for further information.
- **A day with designer Jinny Blom,** exploring two private landscapes, one in its early stages, the other completed, offers a unique chance to understand how she creates her celebrated gardens. A Day of Good Landscape Design, on 9 June, costs £150 including lunch and collection from the meeting point at Swindon railway station. Book at www.theschooloflife.com
- **The catalogue for the Summers Place** May sale of garden statuary, held at The Walled Garden in Billingshurst, West Sussex, is now available at www.summersplaceauctions.com. Auctions take place on 22 and 24 May.
- **Correction**

On page 81 of the April issue we featured the outdoor light 'Sponge' but gave incorrect contact details – apologies for any inconvenience. The correct email address is uk@potteryproject.com

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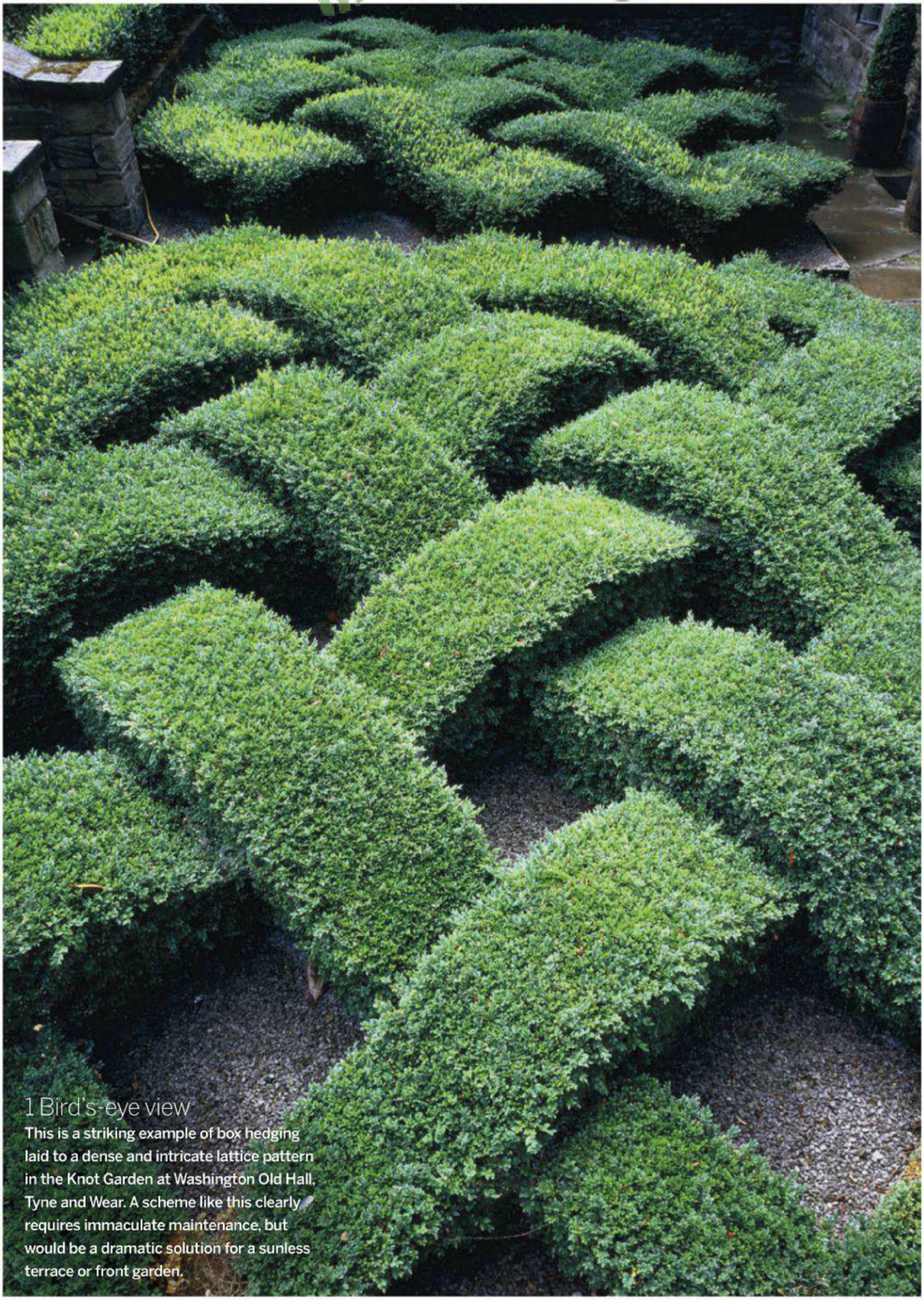


1 Bird's-eye view

This is a striking example of box hedging laid to a dense and intricate lattice pattern in the Knot Garden at Washington Old Hall, Tyne and Wear. A scheme like this clearly requires immaculate maintenance, but would be a dramatic solution for a sunless terrace or front garden.

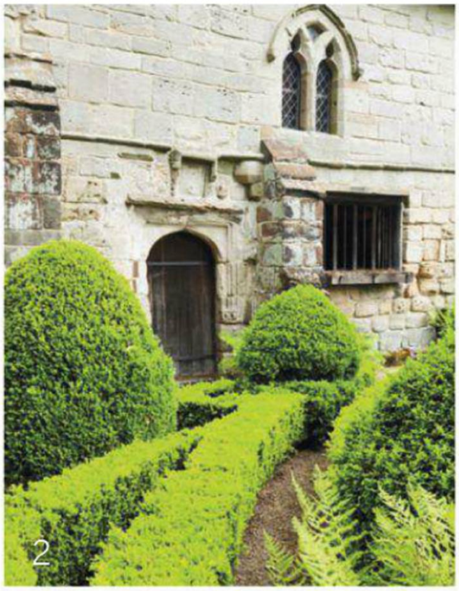
1 JOE CORNISH / NATIONAL TRUST IMAGES; 2 ROBERT MORRIS / NATIONAL TRUST IMAGES; 3 STEPHEN ROBSON / NATIONAL TRUST IMAGES; 4 BRITT WILLOUGHBY DYER; 5 RICHARD ISHIDA

Arne Maynard is a leading garden designer based in London and Monmouthshire

Knot gardens and parterres

Wonderful for adding pattern and structure, these devices can be interpreted for gardens of all sizes

WORDS ARNE MAYNARD



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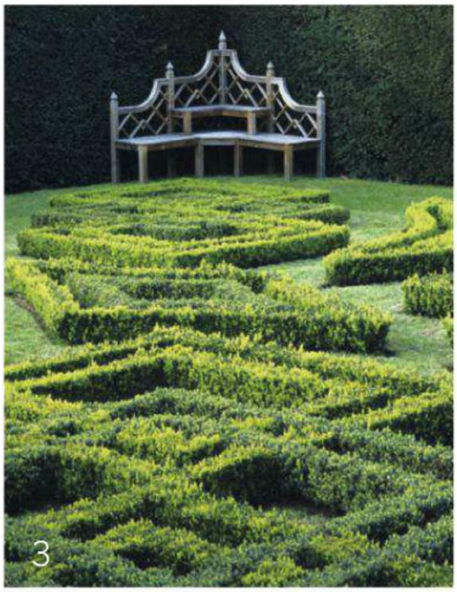

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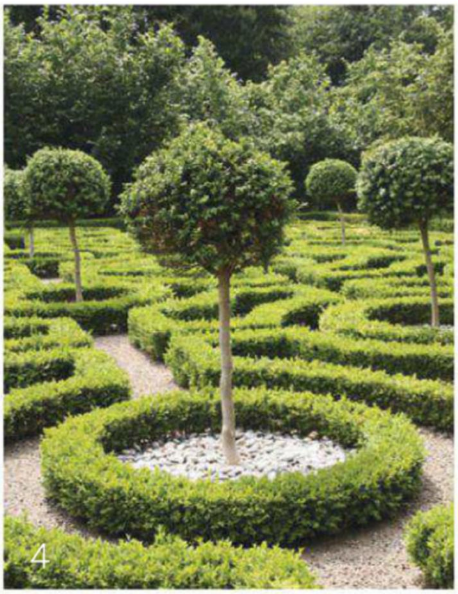

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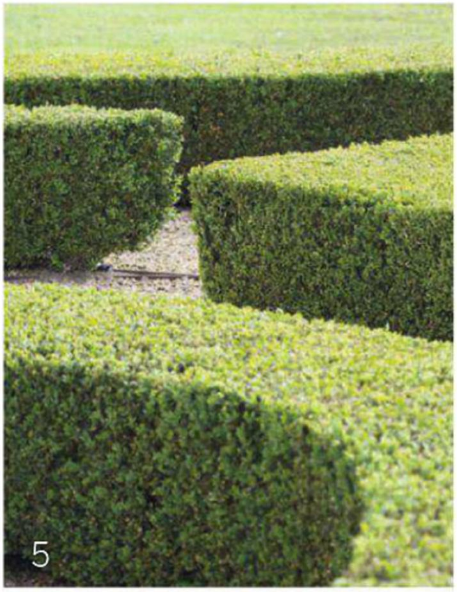


5

2 Sense of place

In this picture we're looking from the herb knot garden towards the medieval range of The Old Manor at Norbury in Derbyshire. The pattern incorporates box cones that act as sentries to the entrance.

3 Green on green

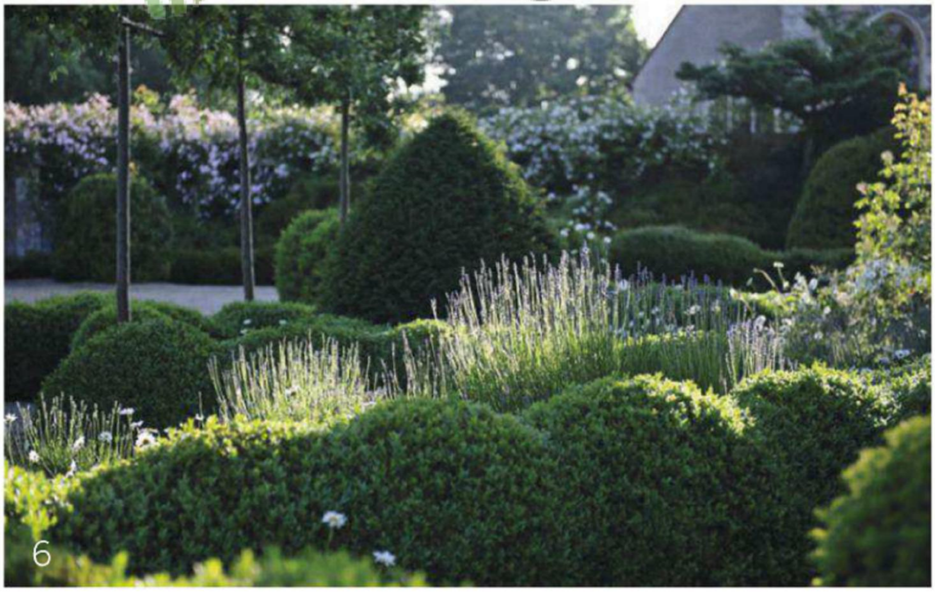
The wonderful knot garden at Antony House in Cornwall offers inspiration for smaller designs with its restricted palette and use of box and wall germander *(Teucrium chamaedrys)* to pick out aspects of the pattern.

4 High points

Though knots are essentially low features, use of height can bring accent to an elaborate pattern. The intricate garden at Moseley Old Hall in Staffordshire uses clipped box standards to establish a rhythm.

5 Living architecture

Knots and parterres can be wonderfully architectural, as here where the planes, curves and angles of precisely clipped hedges are set off by a simple path. In summer, they pick up light and shadow, in winter, frost and snow.

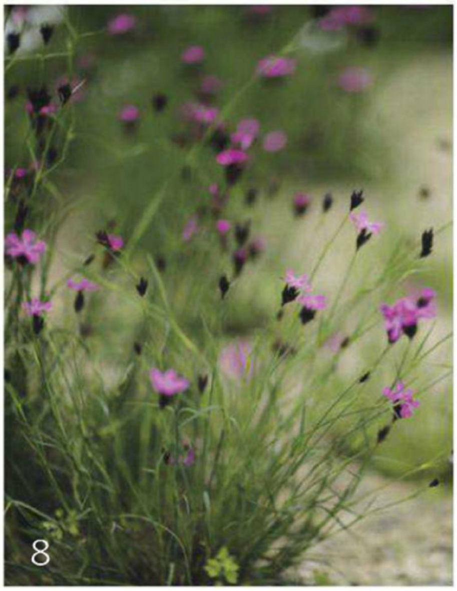


6 A looser knot

This knot garden fronts a Norman manor house in Oxfordshire. I have designed it to reflect both the antiquity of the house and its contrastingly contemporary interior. It is relaxed and informal, with lavenders and ox-eye daisies allowed to self-seed in and around the box hedging.

7 Old English

Lavenders would have been an important constituent of Elizabethan knot gardens and I've used them here for their historic association and to soften the outlines of the box pattern. With suitable growing conditions, lavender will establish and self-seed readily.



8 Monastic flowers

Dianthus carthusianorum (named after the Carthusian order of monks) is a native of the alpine meadows of central and southeast Europe. It thrives in dry, sunny conditions, so is well suited to growing in the limestone chippings that surround this knot garden. It adds pin-pricks of vivid colour from mid to late summer.

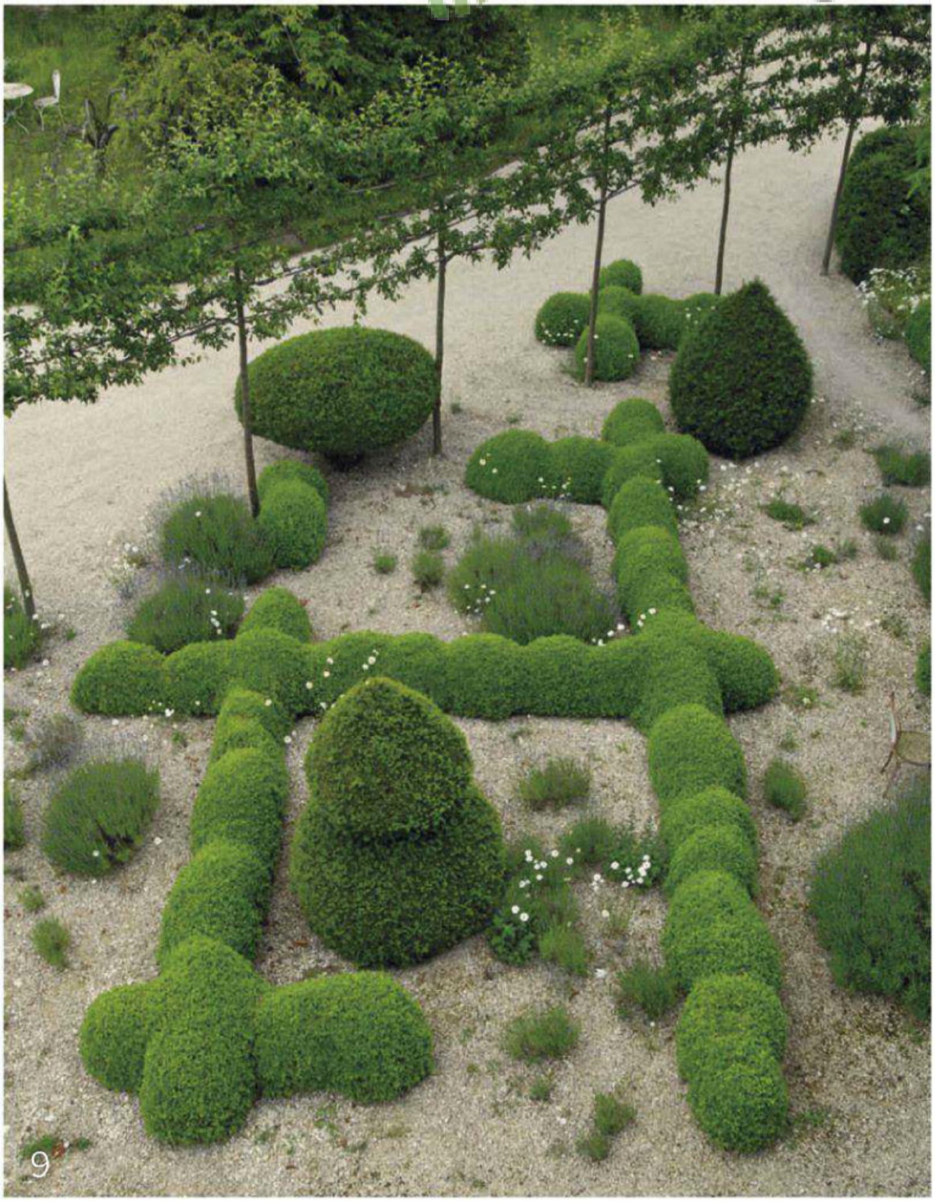
6 & 7 JASON INGRAM; 8 NICK HAND; 9 ROWAN ISAAC

Knot gardens and parterres are similar features created by the grouping of hedging plants. Knot gardens date from Tudor times (late 15th century onwards) or earlier. Parterres are larger, grander statements more often associated with 18th-century gardens.

Both were designed to be seen from above, since in grander houses the living accommodation was usually on the first floor affording a bird's-eye view on to the garden. There was great fascination with pattern-making, especially in Elizabethan times, when panelling and ceilings were layered with patterns and tapestries played a large part in interiors. That fascination with tapestry and the weaving of threads came through in gardens and was reinterpreted with clipped plants. We tend to use clipped box for its longevity, but Tudor knots would have been designed with shrubby aromatics such as germander, rosemary, lavender or santolina.

Originally the clipped plants would have dipped up and down to create the effect of threads passing over and under each other. Sometimes knots were open, with sand or gravel paths between the hedging, sometimes closed, with flowers or herbs taking the place of the paths. These would often have been plants brought over from the New World and displayed like treasures. This is how I like to use knot gardens, creating intimate beds framed by hedging.

A parterre for me is a bigger feature and I often use it as a way of bringing structure to a large area of



lawn or a meadow. Again, it's a pattern that can be viewed from above, but it's also an opportunity to take a journey through the space. In that sense it's like a maze, not one to get lost in, but an invitation for you, the designer, to guide people through a route, slow them down, show a different view. There's a playfulness about these features and being low, 45cm to 60cm high, they are a valuable way of introducing scale and pattern on the horizontal plane.

I tend to place knot gardens as intricate features close to the house, somewhere to view the first snowdrops or display a single beautiful gold lace primula – rather than being lost, its beauty is protected and celebrated in this intimate space. A more contemporary way to use a knot garden is to simplify the internal planting, using a single surface: try mind-your-own-business *(Soleirolia soleirolii)*, sweet violets (*Viola odorata*) or wild strawberry, so the effect is green and textural.

With the bigger scale of a parterre, I sometimes allow for freeform shapes and more fluid lines. I may use a larger hedging plant such as green or copper beech (or in a warm climate, rosemary) for the lines and then lay the pattern over lawn, so that the spaces are filled with green.

Another simple and effective form is the turf parterre, with the pattern cut into the lawn and the spaces or paths filled with limestone chippings or, in keeping with earlier traditions, crushed brick. ◻

NEXT MONTH Using roses in garden design.

9 Something old, something new

Looking down on this knot from the windows above, the pattern can be seen clearly. Broken lines of box hedging and the organic shapes suggest an old knot garden that's been eroded over time, but equally give a strong sense of asymmetry and modernity to the structure.

Stockists

Hedging & topiaries

The European Boxwood and Topiary Society has links to nurseries across the UK supplying hedging plants and topiaries. The society also organises lectures and garden visits. www.ebts.org

Varied choices

When filling a knot with a simple combination, or just a single species, it's worth seeking out the more unusual plant choices. Try using sweet violets, available from Groves Nurseries. www.grovesnurseries.co.uk

Historical inspiration

Ideas for knot gardens and parterres often come from looking at old books. You can track down copies of *The Gardener's Labyrinth* by Thomas Hill, first published in 1577, from online booksellers. It is full of wood engravings with wonderful ideas for designs. www.amazon.co.uk or www.abebooks.co.uk

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La Malherbe on the French Riviera is one of the gorgeous gardens in *Mediterranean Landscape Design: Vernacular Contemporary,* the new book by Louisa Jones, reviewed on page 109

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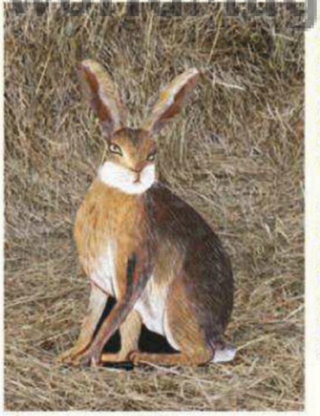

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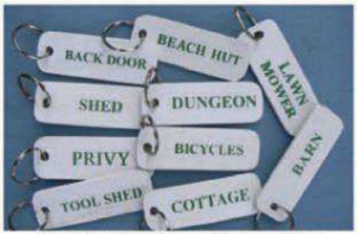
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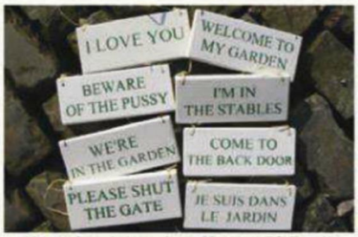
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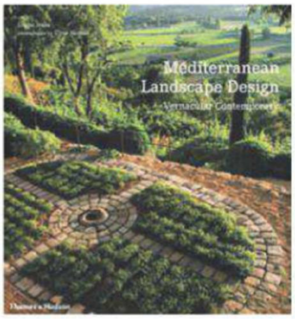


MEDITERRANEAN LANDSCAPE DESIGN: Vernacular contemporary

by Louisa Jones with photographs by Clive Nichols

Thames & Hudson, £32
ISBN 978-0500516119

CLIVE NICHOLS

La Malherbe on the French Riviera, beautifully photographed by Clive Nichols, is one of the gardens featured in Louisa Jones's new book

Louisa Jones has produced a number of sumptuously illustrated and well-written books on the gardening scene in France – particularly the south of the country – but this is her most ambitious and scholarly work so far. It's easy to be seduced by the gorgeously photographed images, but this is no mere coffee-table book. The accompanying text offers an analysis of the role of man in nature and its thesis has relevance for landscape designers, land artists, ecologists and ethnobotanists the world over.

Louisa Jones challenges the dogma that human activity is necessarily extraneous to the environment; that artists – be they landscapers, poets or sculptors and however appealing the results of their labours – appropriate and control the world around them. In the context of current landscape art and design around the Mediterranean, Louisa has found a rich supply of material that confronts the old orthodoxies.

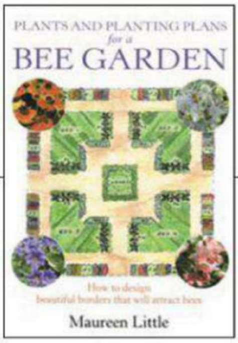
In Spain, we find Fernando Caruncho revealing the 'universal language' of divine geometry in his green and gold landscapes, ordered by grids of trees and grasses and water. In Provence we see how Marc Nucera and the late Alain-David Idoux learned the art of exposing the essential form of trees from Nicole de Vésian. In the mountainous hinterland of the Alpes Maritimes, Andy Goldsworthy's installations in clay and stone have uncovered a kind of truth about the beauty of the landscape they inhabit. The Filippi nursery near Montpellier, which produces drought-tolerant Mediterranean plants, is highlighted for its understanding of local ecosystems, long-term natural associations and plant migrations. We meet Gilles Clément and Erik Borja, both advocates of site-specific garden creation, and Ninfa garden is presented as a lesson in the 'loving enhancement' of a magical site.

The text is heavy with references to poets, artists and writers, spanning a millennium of human activity in the Mediterranean. It calls for attentive reading rather than casual browsing and readers may feel overwhelmed by the landslide of quotations that interrupt the author's words. It is fortunate that Clive Nichols's photographs speak with their equal eloquence.

Kirsty Fergusson is a garden writer who lives in Cornwall and France.

book offer

RRP £32. **Reader offer price £30** including p&p.


PLANTS AND PLANTING PLANS for a
BEE GARDEN
How to design beautiful borders that will attract bees
Maureen Little

PLANTS AND PLANTING PLANS FOR A BEE GARDEN

by Maureen Little
Spring Hill, £14.99
ISBN 978-1905862801

There is nothing more wonderful than closing your eyes and listening to the productive buzz of bees. Maureen Little's book concentrates on bee plants and is written from two perspectives – garden design and beekeeping. It has meticulous planting plans for a variety of styles that include cottage garden, traditional, naturalistic and shrubby.

There's plenty of inspiration, with colour-themed plans, a spiral cutting garden, a beekeeper's garden, herb garden and a flower, fruit and vegetable patch. The plants are truly bee-friendly and a table lists flowering season, height, spread and colour. There is a good section on design that will help all gardeners, novice or experienced. The 4 Fs are identified: – focus, framework, flowers and fillers, with suggestions for each plan.

I like the book from the design and plant angle but would have liked more specific information on the sugar content of nectar (which varies greatly) and flower shape. Different flowers also attract different pollinators and I felt the book could have offered more depth.

Val Bourne is a garden writer, photographer and lecturer

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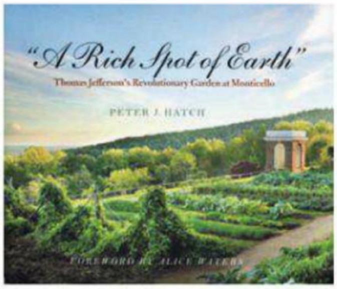
A RICH SPOT OF EARTH

Peter J Hatch
Yale University Press, £25
ISBN 978-0300171143



For 58 years, Thomas Jefferson, the third president of the USA and principal author of the Declaration of Independence, kept a garden book. In it he recorded in detail every aspect of sowing and harvesting the vegetables he grew in successive gardens, most significantly at the mountain-top garden he made at Monticello from the 1770s. Peter Hatch addresses his subject with the same exhaustive minuteness – but then this 1,000-foot vegetable plot has been his life. He has cared for it since he saw it reborn from wasteground in the 1980s.

Hatch begins with a flourish: he shows us an unrivalled 'collection of esculent talent, culled from virtually every western culture known at the time' (not to mention Native American and African slave culture). He identifies this garden melting pot as 'uniquely American in its scale, diversity, composition and experimental character'.

Jefferson is revealed as a horticultural pioneer, champion of the aubergine and tomato, peanuts and sesame, and also as America's first foodie, though the nation may not now thank him for introducing potato chips. He was a man of vast enthusiasms: he was fanatical about peas, sowed 'a thimbleful of lettuce' every Monday, and tried tarragon year after year, though it never grew for him. We learn that Michelle Obama's White House vegetable patch was inspired by Monticello, and Hatch can't resist letting slip he has been planting heirloom veg with the First Lady.

Visually, the book can be repetitious – there are only so many ways a long, thin plot can be photographed – but there is much interesting archive material, and pleasing vegetable still-lifes composed with the care of a Dutch master. Half the book is given to a compendium of the produce grown at Monticello, where Hatch earns top marks for his meticulous research, but no less for his entirely Jeffersonian paean to the tennis ball lettuce: 'a delicate buttery bowl of moist, vegetable bliss'.

Ambra Edwards is an author and freelance garden writer

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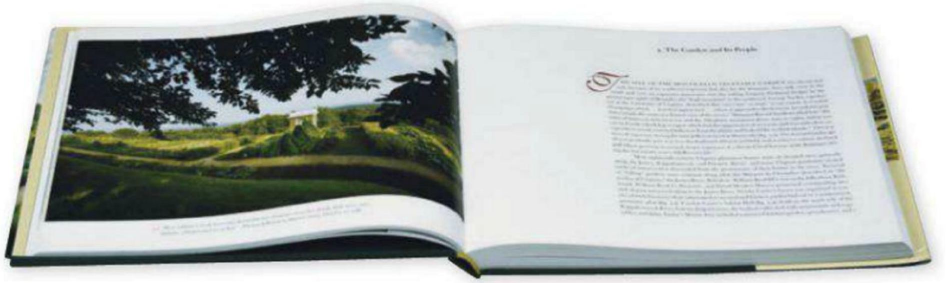
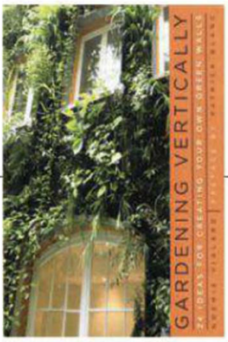




GARDENING VERTICALLY

by Noémie Vialard. WW Norton & Company, £17.99

ISBN 978-0393733709

Patric Blanc's impressive vertical gardens have been around for some years, but up until now the secrets of his methods have not been revealed. Noémie Vialard's book, prefaced by Blanc, explains how to create your own little green wall (a maximum of seven feet high is advised for diy-installed domestic projects) with clear, step-by-step instructions including useful photographs.

The author is passionate about green walls but makes clear it is a complex and costly undertaking. The framework and planting is just the beginning. You then need to work out, albeit with Vialard's guidance, how often to irrigate it and what concentration of nutrients your wall will need. For this reason, the book is best suited to a keen and competent diy-er or dedicated gardener.

Pitfalls are addressed and methods well explained although it is disappointing that the actual planting is somewhat skimmed over and the useful suppliers list is specific to France and the USA. Suggested compositions include a herb wall and an epicurean wall of salads and vegetables, and there is also inspiring advice on conventional climbing plants.

Paula McWaters is a gardening writer and editor.

book offer

RRP £17.99. **Reader offer price £16.99** including p&p.

HOW TO CREATE AN ECO-GARDEN

by John Walker

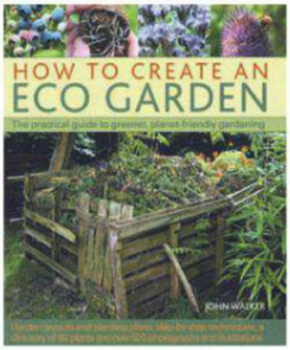
Aquamarine, £14.99

ISBN 978-903141892

With many parts of the country currently experiencing hosepipe bans and an increasing number of us wanting, and even needing, to grow our own food, this book should be walking off the shelves. The statistics for habitat loss for wildlife, both flora and fauna, makes sobering reading. The recent potentially catastrophic collapse of the bee population, vital to the survival of nature itself, is an indication that we all need to change our habits.

Gardeners are in a unique position to make a valuable contribution. Aerial photographs of our country show a patchwork of interlinked green spaces – our gardens, allotments and parks – where with a bit of thought we can significantly improve the environment and re-introduce wildlife such as butterflies, ladybirds, bees, frogs and birds.

The author, an award-winning writer on gardening and the environment, has carefully thought about the practical as well as the global issues. Underlying all the projects is the question: 'how will this make a difference?' The book starts with the basics on how to improve soil fertility and goes on to cover collecting rain water, composting, growing under glass, mulching and using sustainable materials in landscaping projects. The book covers both ornamental gardening and food growing.



The case for being eco-friendly is compelling: gardening is one of the biggest leisure activities in the country, so if all of us make even a small change the result will be huge. It's also satisfying to work with nature rather than defying it.

My only criticism is that the directory of eco-friendly plants at the end of the book is rather short, just ten in each section of annuals, perennials and trees, for example. But it's a good starting point for further exploration and experimentation, the basis of all good gardening.

Caroline Beck is a writer and radio producer, and is currently turning a concrete schoolyard into a bee and butterfly friendly garden.

book offer

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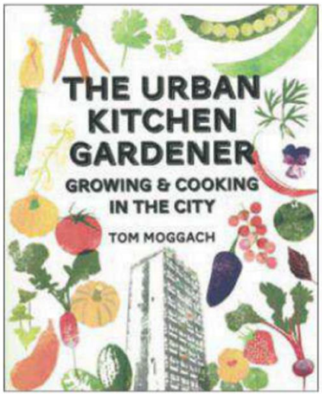
FOOD GARDENING

Book reviews

THE URBAN KITCHEN GARDENER

by Tom Moggach

Kyle Cathie, £16.99
ISBN 978-1856269865



As Tom Moggach says, growing food is different in the city. The constraints of space, light and busy schedules mean difficult choices have to made, but lack of acreage should concentrate the mind, while your plot should benefit from the microclimate and shelter that cities offer.

Tom is also a food writer, so makes a convincing connection between plot and plate. His recipes are light, modern and inventive, and his ingredients are augmented with edible flowers, home-laid hens' eggs and his own city garden honey. Ingredients are fashionable but appropriate: beetroot, chillis, squash, mouse melons, radishes, peas and tomatoes are covered. So too are shiso, sorrel, coriander and lemon verbena as well as fruit currants and goosegogs. Recipes include basil and lime ice cream, shiso granita and chilli cornbread.

The layout is helpful: each ingredient is described with recommended varieties and pest warnings, followed by growing, harvesting and preserving instructions, aptly succeeded by ingenious suggestions for use and recipes. Useful sections include how to be green in a small space, a pond in a salvaged bath tub, saving water and vermicompost. Pot culture is exploited to the full and advice on the suitability for container growing is included with each ingredient, plus information on which bit of the plant to eat and how much sunlight each plant needs.

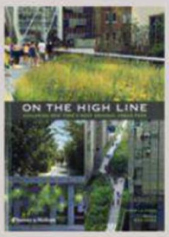
The benefits of vegetable, fruit, salad and herb growing for the city gardener come in spadefuls. Urban vegetable prices are high, true freshness is rare, and as an antidote to city life, relaxation in the open air keeps you fit and healthy.

I loved this book: the tone is encouraging and enthusiastic, the recipes mouth-watering and the photos by Laura Hynd are beautiful, making this the ultimate edible gardeners' guide – my large town garden seems slightly underproductive by comparison.
Francine Raymond runs the Henkeepers' Association and writes a column in the Sunday Telegraph. □

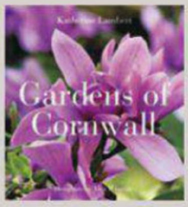
book offer

RRP £16.99. **Reader offer price £14.99** including p&p.

other recently released books for gardeners



ON THE HIGH LINE
by Annik La Farge
Highly-illustrated study of New York's High Line, the urban park created on an eleveted former railroad.
Thames & Hudson, £19.95
ISBN 978-0500290200



GARDENS OF CORNWALL
by Katherine Lambert and Alex Ramsay
An armchair tour of some of the great Cornish gardens and historic estates.
Frances Lincoln, £16.99
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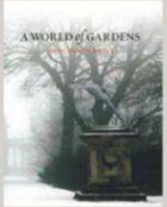

A WORLD OF GARDENS
by John Dixon Hunt
A study of how cultural assumptions have shaped gardens and their meanings.
Reaktion, £29
ISBN 978-1861898807

HERITAGE FRUITS AND VEGETABLES
by Toby Musgrave, Clay Perry
A season by season celebration of the diversity of traditional varieties.
Thames & Hudson, £38
ISBN 978-0500516133

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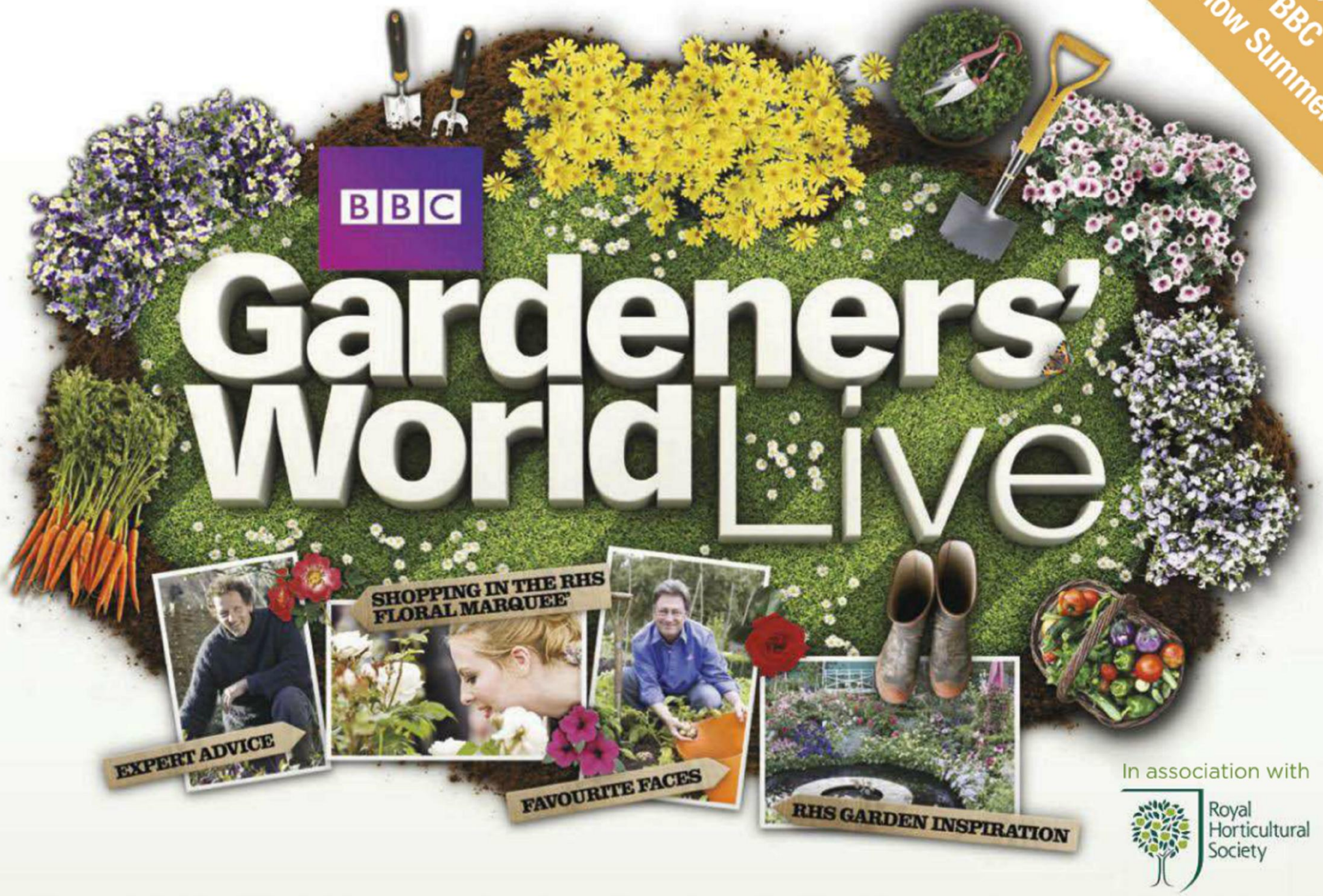

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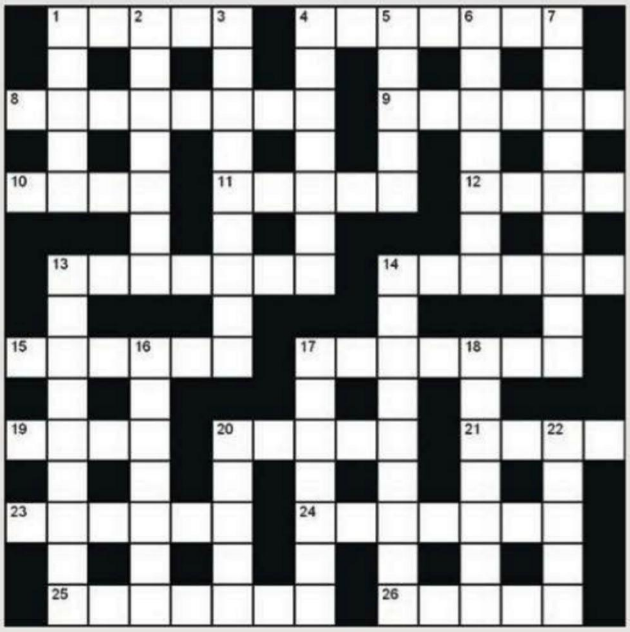
Crossword



ACROSS

1 Soft stone fruit – penny, every single one! (5)

4 Plots ... at the heart of the 'NGS' (7)

8 Geometric garden style featured in Arne Maynard's 'Designs' (8)

9 Sir Harry, horticulturist, helped design Ascott House gardens (6)

10 Species of cucurbit's partly ripe pods (4)

11 Buffeted by the wind, busy lizzie heads now damaged (5)

12 Very small workers in the garden? (4)

13 Fancy shrub clipping such as Ascott's sundial (7)

14 The tallow tree genus puma is moving (6)

15 Periwinkles – odd variances are removed (6)

17 The oak genus (7)

19 Like the shallow shape of mangetout pods left in lard, say? (4)

20 State of soil ideal for seedlings 'Love-in-a-mist'! (5)

21 Briefly, county location of Rousham (4)

23 Dahlia roots, er, put in garden containers (6)

24 Site of RHS's most prestigious garden show? (7)

25 Struggles of eg varieties of plants? (7)

26 Dubious light condition liked by eg astilbe? (5)

DOWN

1 Deciduous tree seen around Gatwick, say? (5)

2 Spencer's ancestral home: Dan Pearson redesigned its gardens (7)

3 Hardwood trees of *Carpinus* genus, destroyed barn homes (9)

4 Mark, garden designer/landscapist we feature in 'Who's Who' (7)

5 Sarah, BBC *Gardener's World* presenter's wild party, end of garden! (5)

6 A fruit's outermost layer – *Acer* pip, perhaps (7)

7 Short-handled pruning tools (9)

13 Wake-robins, etc starting with a bird call! (9)

14 Fragrant flowers in the National Collection of *Lathyrus* at Weaver's Cottage (5,4)

16 Dandelion-like weed – Tom's spike of corn? (4,3)

17 Pear-shaped fruits of genus *Cydonia* (7)

18 In Jericho, is yam an evergreen fragrant shrub? (7)

20 Former class of mosses within division *Bryophyta* – odd music! (5)

22 Where a fertilised seed develops (5)

SOLUTIONS TO THIS MONTH'S CROSSWORD WILL BE PRINTED NEXT MONTH

APRIL'S SOLUTIONS

ACROSS: 1 *Fuchsia* **5** Chalk **8** *Lilium* **9** Mandarin **10** Ties **11** Cones **12** Iffy **14** Blanches **16** Rustle **17** Gritty **19** Hosepipe **21** Dawn **22** Lilac **24** Iona **25** Cherokee **27** *Prunus* **28** Palms **29** *Dierama*.

DOWN: 1 *Fritillaria* **2** Crimson **3** *Sumac* **4** Almonds **5** Canes **6** *Acacias* **7** Koi **13** *Filipendula* **15** Hay **16** RHS **18** Tendril **19** Halberd **20** *Primula* **22** Lakes **23** Copse **26** Hip.

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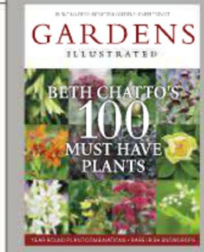
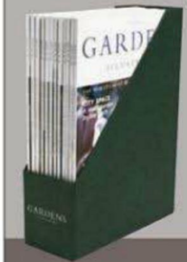


FEBRUARY 2012
Beth Chatto's 100 must-have plants; Masterclass in planting borders; Rare Irish snowdrops; Sweet-scented *Daphne* profiled; Design ideas for garden meadows.

MARCH 2012
Perfect spring planting combinations; Sarah Price's pretty spring pots; Heritage daffodils; Dan Pearson on shrubs; The garden at York Gate; *Camellia* profile.

APRIL 2012
Transform your front garden; Tulip filled urban oasis; Arts & Crafts garden; Designing water features; Choosing *Cornus* for flowers; Perfect spring plants.



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TEL **01962 772512**

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WEBSITE **www.mabelandrose.com**

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WEBSITE **www.heritagegardentraders.co.uk**

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WEBSITE **www.edbrooks.com**

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WEBSITE **www.leanderplantsupports.co.uk**
TEL **01773 550495**

GARDENS2YOU.CO.UK

This exclusive heart-shaped, cast iron bird feeder makes the perfect gift for £14.99. Gardens2you offer a wide range of ornaments and accessories delivered direct to your door.

WEBSITE **www.gardens2you.co.uk**
TEL **01933 624084**

Chelsea show guide 2012

Don't miss out – come and see this fantastic selection of stands and products at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show 2012.

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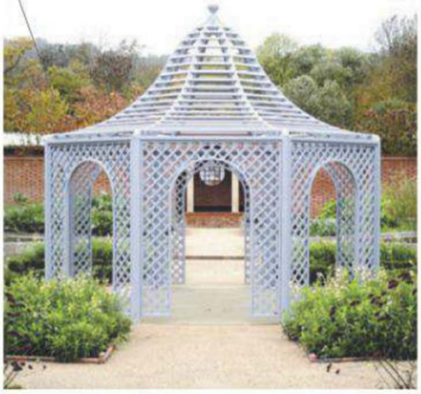
Manufacturers of quality bespoke garden joinery. Handmade to order in a variety of timbers and finishes, including trellis, contemporary slatted panels, solid avenue fencing, gates, planters, rose arches, pergolas, gazebos, trompe l'oeils and summer houses.

WEBSITE **www.gardentrellis.co.uk**
TEL **01255 688361** STAND NO **PW18**



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A Mad Hatter's Tea Party Invitation. FREE cup of Clipper tea at Stand SR9 with 'Alice', 'Cheshire Cat', 'White Rabbit', 'Dodo', 'Knave of Hearts' and the 'Smoking Caterpillar'! Enchanting bronze sculptures lovingly modelled from Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

WEBSITE **www.wonderlandbronze.com**
TEL **07515 126 119** STAND NO **SR9**

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WEBSITE **www.iangillsculpture.com**
TEL **01279 851113** STAND NO **RHW9**

KUBOTA UK LIMITED

Kubota have announced the return of their spring cash-back programme on selected products bought by 30 June 2012. The offer is for £200 cash-back on a GR1600 or T1800 ride-on mower, or £300 on the GR2100 or GR2120 models.

WEBSITE **www.kubota.co.uk**
TEL **01844 268168** STAND NO **RHW20**

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Somerset based, Lily has exhibited at Chelsea for over 15 years. Her fountain figures, planters and wall plaques have a unique style and warmth, reflecting her approach to sculpture, being playful and serious at the same time.

WEBSITE **www.lilysawtell.com**
TEL **07966 468069** STAND NO **SR35**

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WEBSITE **www.greenoakfurniture.co.uk**
TEL **01635 281786**

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Regular award winners Cutting Edge will again be displaying examples from their range of distinctive garden buildings, all with architectural appeal and designed with the discerning gardener in mind.

WEBSITE **www.cuttingedgegardenbuildings.com**
TEL **01252 835735** STAND NO **PW20**

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WEBSITE **www.secretgardensfurniture.com**
TEL **020 8464 5327**
STAND NO **RHW11**

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TEL **01297 443084** STAND NO **PW6**

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TEL **01458 223378** STAND NO **as above**

Gardens to Visit Chelsea Special

Enjoy this bounty of wonderful gardens to visit over the spectacular Spring and Summer months

1. ABBEYWOOD GARDENS

An exciting all season garden in the heart of Cheshire. Rare and unusual woodland plants in Jane's Garden. Long flowering naturalistically planted herbaceous borders in the Main Gardens. Exciting and vibrantly planted Christopher Lloyd inspired Exotic Garden. A young Arboretum with interesting evergreen and deciduous trees. New and mature woodlands with a 2km nature walk. The Garden Cafe serves a delicious seasonal menu.

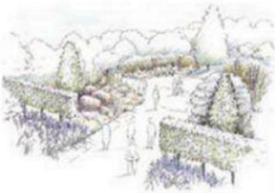
WEBSITE **www.abbeywoodgardenscheshire.co.uk**
TEL **01606 301374**

2. ABERGLASNEY GARDENS

A Heritage Garden of Excellence. Historic Aberglasney House and Gardens is recognised as one of Wales' finest attractions, covering 10 acres with an Elizabethan Cloister garden at its heart. Excellent shop, plant sales, art exhibitions and cafe. Open all year.

WEBSITE **www.aberglasney.org**
TEL **01558 668998**

3. SIR HAROLD HILLIER GARDENS



Sir Harold Hillier Gardens, Hampshire, offers outstanding beauty every season. In June, visit the newly replanted and reopened Centenary Border, one of the biggest borders in the UK at 250 metres long, with over 30,000 plants. Art in the Garden sculpture exhibition until October. Excellent restaurant and Tea Rooms, including special Jubilee Afternoon Teas at the Victorian manor house.

WEBSITE **www.hilliergardens.org.uk**
TEL **01794 369317/318**

4. RHINOS ON THE LAWN!

Walk amongst our walled garden with exotic plants and giant Amazonian water lily. Prairie style planting and wild flower meadows make a stunning backdrop for Rhinos, Zebras and Giraffe. The Park has many mature trees (a Wellingtonia about 130 feet tall) and a 600 year old oak, with stunning seasonal planting.

ADDRESS **Burford, Oxfordshire OX18 4JP**
WEBSITE **www.cotswoldwildlifepark.co.uk**
TEL **01993 823006**

5. DORMY HOUSE HOTEL

Hidcote

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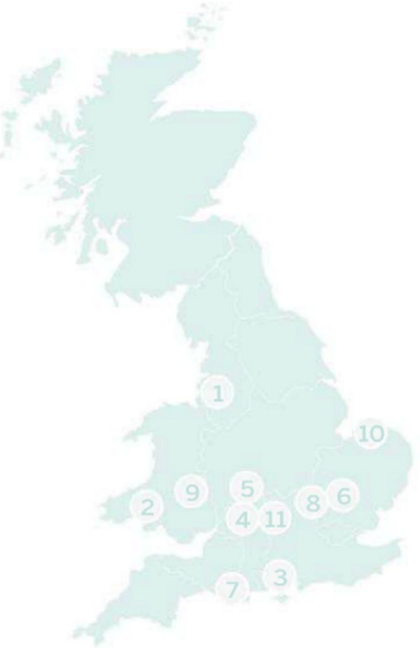
WEBSITE **www.dormyhouse.co.uk**
TEL **01386 852711**

6. MARKS HALL

Marks Hall Gardens and Arboretum provides a great day out for the whole family. The historic country estate is surrounded by parkland, an arboretum, lakes and cascades, woodland walks, amazing plants from around the world, a visitor Centre and a stunning walled garden.

WEBSITE **www.markshall.org.uk**
TEL **01376 563796**



7. ATHELHAMPTON HOUSE & GARDENS

Athelhampton House & Gardens in Dorset is one of England's finest 15th Century Manor Houses with stunning Architectural gardens which the house is set in the heart of. Four Ham stone courts in the Elizabethan style create a formal structure, with superb planting and fountains and pools throughout. The Great Court after 100 years has evolved into a unique Topiary spectacle with twelve giant yew pyramids standing 30 foot high.

WEBSITE **www.athelhampton.co.uk**
TEL **01305 848363** EMAIL **enquiry@athelhampton.co.uk**

8. CAPEL MANOR

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WEBSITE **www.capelmanorgardens.co.uk**
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9. HAMPTON COURT CASTLE & GARDENS

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ADDRESS **Leominster, Herefordshire HR6 0PN**
WEBSITE **www.hamptoncourt.org.uk**
TEL **01568 797777**

10. PENSTHORPE WILDLIFE AND GARDENS

From the structural beauty of the Millennium Garden to the lush foliage in the Wave Garden, the habitat-specific Wildlife Habitat Garden and the subtle, traditionally-managed flood plain of the Wildflower Meadow - Pensthorpe's stunning gardens provide year round colour and interest. New sculpture and planting in our extended Wave Garden will open in late June.

WEBSITE **www.pensthorpe.com**
EMAIL **info@pensthorpe.com**
TEL **01328 851465**

11. WATERPERRY GARDENS

8 acres of breathtaking ornamental gardens, a quality plant centre and garden shop, gallery, gift barn and teashop. Find everything you need for the gardening year ahead including a huge range of our own grown shrubs and herbaceous plants, seasonal bedding and vegetable plants. Don't miss our Dawn Chorus Wild Walk on May 24th or a whole host of outdoor theatre and events this summer.

ADDRESS **Waterperry, near Wheatley, Oxfordshire OX33 1JZ**
WEBSITE **www.waterperrygardens.co.uk**
TEL **01844 339254**

12. PICTON CASTLE & GARDENS

Picton Castle is "One of the finest gardens in Wales", with 40 acres of uniquely beautiful gardens with tranquil walks with all year round interest.. Entertain the family with seasonal woodland trails, adventure play area and maze. Picton is an RHS Partner Garden and the collections of Rhododendrons and Azaleas are at their peak in May – celebrated as "Picton in Bloom".

ADDRESS **The Rhos, Haverfordwest, SA62 4AS**
WEBSITE **www.pictoncastle.co.uk**
TEL **01437 751326**

13. ABBOTSBURY SUBTROPICAL GARDENS

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Abbotsbury Subtropical Gardens in Dorset are considered one of the best in the UK. Winner of HHA/ CHRISTIE'S Garden of the year Award 2012, described by Alan Titchmarsh as" one of the finest Gardens I have ever visited". A gem on the world heritage Coast open from 10am daily, free parking.

ADDRESS **Bullers Way, Abbotsbury, Dorset, DT3 4LA**
WEBSITE **www.abbotsburygardens.co.uk**
TEL **01305 871387**

14. HOPTON HALL

Spectacular historic walled garden planted with over 2000 roses.
Wander through 5 acres of formal gardens including croquet lawn, rosewalk, ornamental ponds, wildlife lake, Arboretum, Laburnum Tunnel, Birch Avenue.
Open every day from 11th June to 8th July thereafter every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday until 23rd August.
Open every day 24th to 31st August, 10.30am last entries 4pm.

ADDRESS **Hpton Hall, Hopton, Derbyshire DE4 4DF**
WEBSITE **www.hoptonhall.co.uk**
TEL **01629 540923**

15. SUDELEY CASTLE & GARDENS

Sudeley Castle's award-winning gardens have their origins in Tudor parterres and topiary. They are at their best during Rose Week, 11-17th June 2012, when an abundance of scent and the billowing blossoms of old-fashioned roses in the Queens Garden delight the senses. Guided tours are available.

ADDRESS **Winchcombe, Gloucestershire GL54 5JD**
WEBSITE **www.sudeleycastle.co.uk**
TEL **01242 604244**

16. BIRMINGHAM BOTANICAL GARDENS

Fifteen acres of themed landscaped gardens with 7000 plants shrubs and trees and four glasshouses. Open-air music and theatre in summer. National Bonsai Collection; Rock Pool; Alpine Yard; Rose Garden; Rhododendron and Woodland Walks. Children's Playground; art gallery; gift shop and plant sales; tearoom; car parking.

WEBSITE **www.birminghambotanicalgardens.org.uk**
TEL **0121 454 1860**

17. SPETCHLEY PARK GARDENS

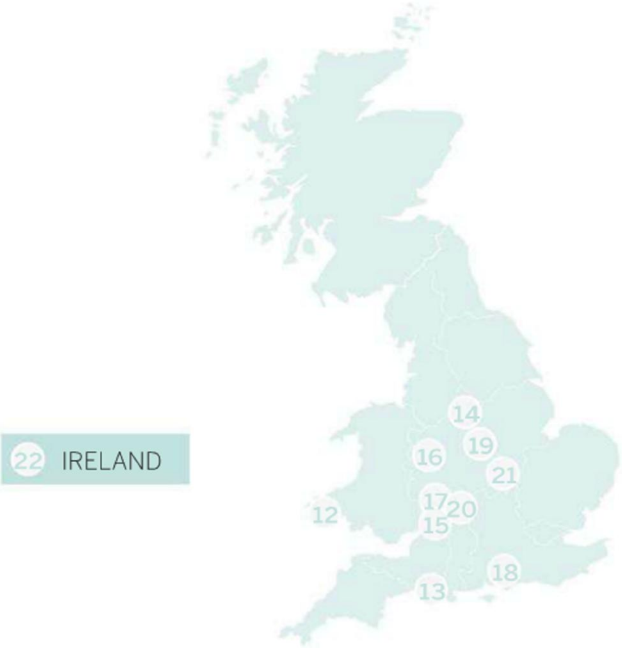
Surrounded by glorious countryside and a deer park this 30 acre Victorian paradise, boasts an enviable collection of rare plant treasures. Whether you are looking for the perfect day out or place to hold your wedding, Spetchley has it all. Located 2m east of Worcester.

WEBSITE **www.spetchleygardens.co.uk**
TEL **01453 810 303**

18. THE GARDEN SHOWS

A wide range of gardening products, sculpture, art, gifts, foods, wines and therapies. With specialist nurseries, plant doctors, interactive workshops, much to entertain the children and a chance to explore stunning parklands…
Life is very good at The Garden Shows!
Stansted Park, Rowlands Castle, Hants, PO9 6DX (15-17 June)
Loseley Park, Guildford, Surrey, GU3 1HS (20-22 July)

WEBSITE **www.thegardenshowonline.com**
TEL **01243 538456**
EMAIL **info@thegardenshowonline.com**



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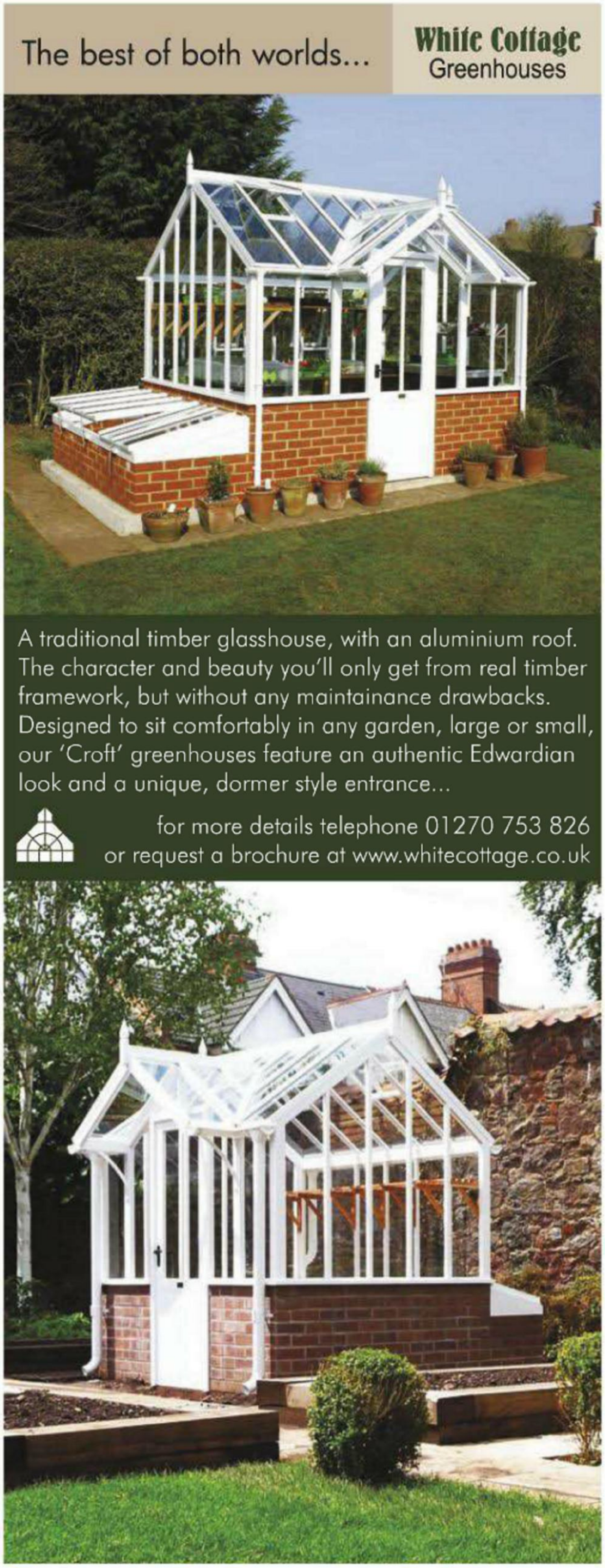
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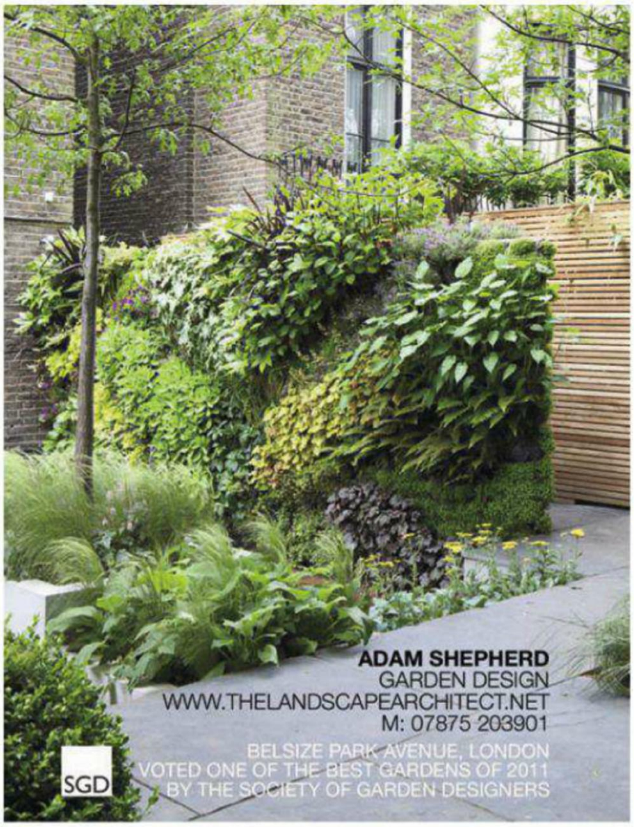

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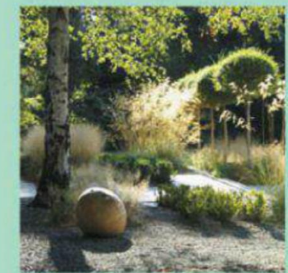

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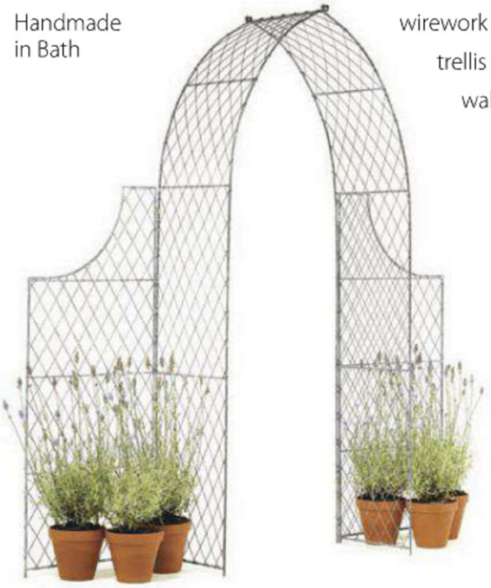

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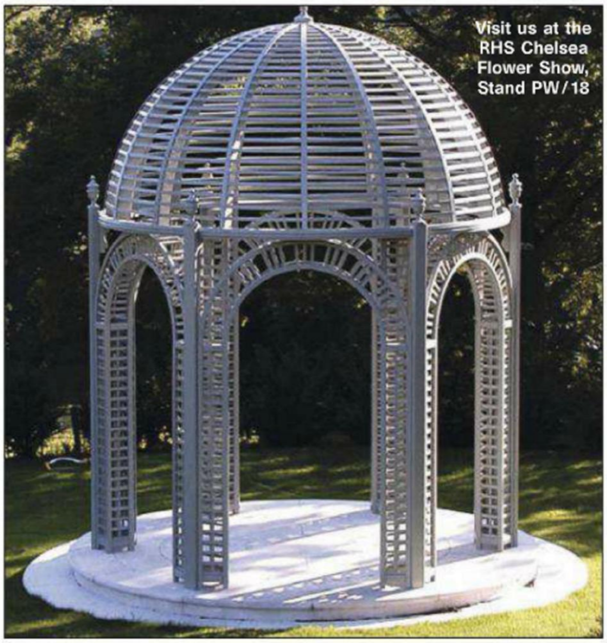

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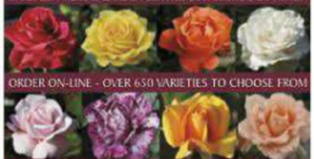

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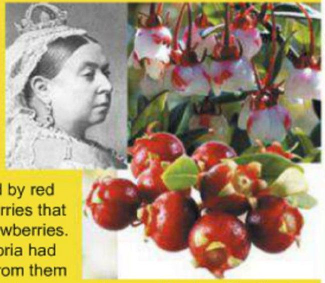

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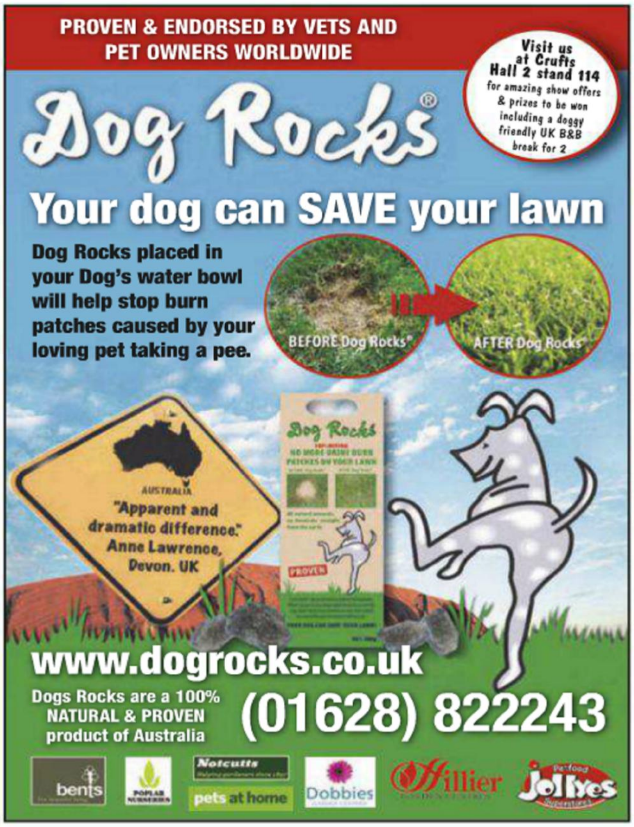

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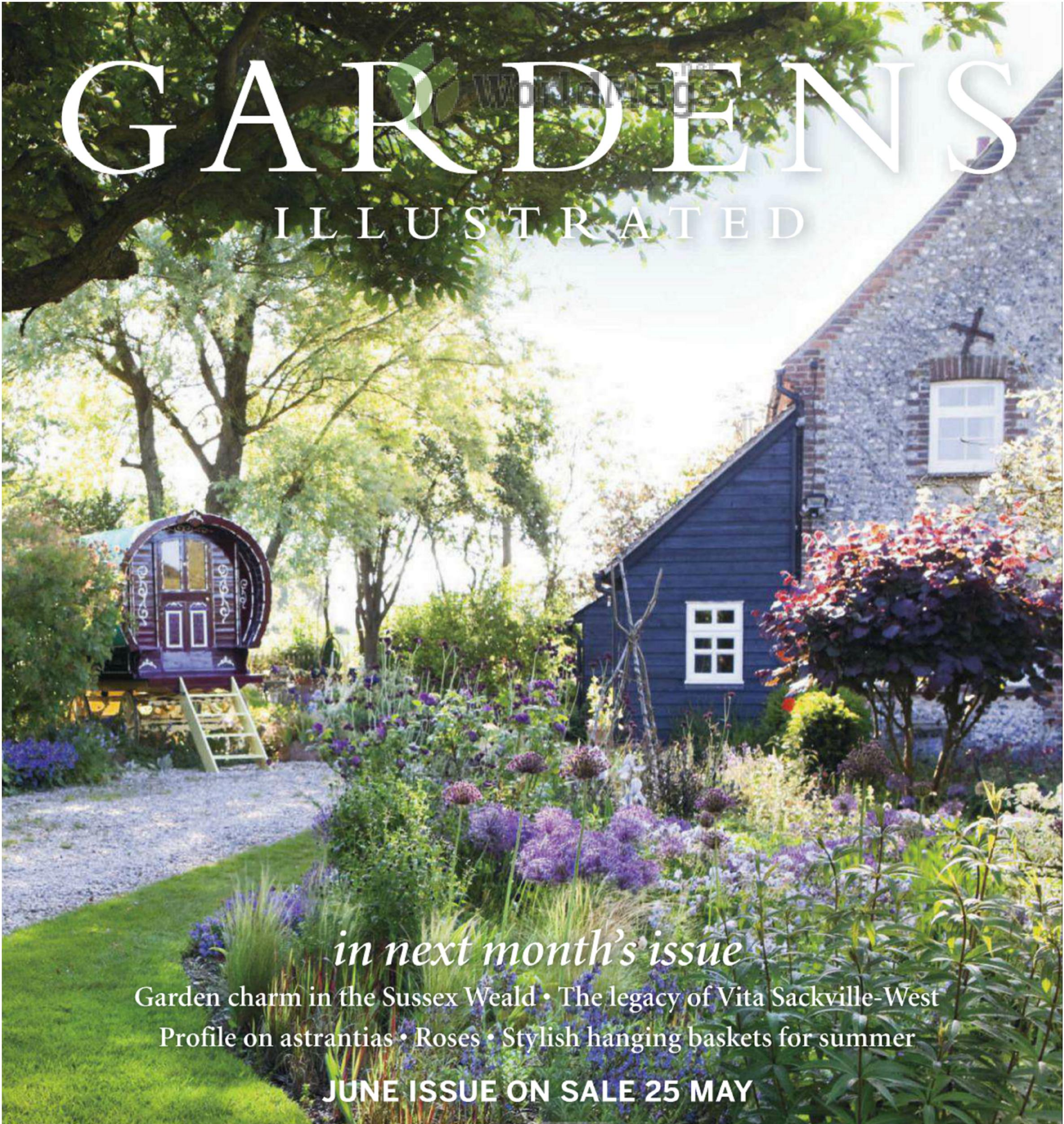

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Garden charm in the Sussex Weald • The legacy of Vita Sackville-West
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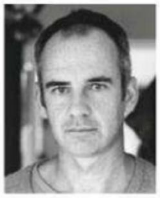
RACHEL WARNE

Palely loitering

Seed sown too early in a fit of enthusiasm is doomed to struggle through a late cold snap

WORDS **FRANK RONAN** ILLUSTRATION **ANGELA HARDING**

By now some of us will be looking at rows of sturdy little annuals ready to be planted out while the rest of us are frantically reading the backs of seed packets to see if anything can be salvaged from our good intentions. Much as I long to be among the exalted ranks of the former, the reality is that life, climate and temperament will conspire to shunt me towards the latter.



Frank Ronan is a novelist who lives and gardens in Worcestershire

The year will have begun brilliantly with a grand review of all the seeds, during which they are sorted into the chronological order in which they are to be sown, followed, while the blood is up, with a great splurge of sowing. Seven tenths of that will go to waste, because it was too early and what will have survived the annual surprise of a late cold snap will be crowded, drawn and anaemic while I rest on my laurels and wait for the next bout of potting bench fever.

I don't want to make excuses because I could do a lot better, but all the people I know who get this right every year are either professionals or employers of professionals. It takes focus to coax plants into being at a time and place that suits us more than them. You miss one watering or neglect to close the frames on the wrong evening and you are left with stunted cripples that will never catch up and will haunt you the whole summer with their rickety inadequacy. It might be added that the professionals, lacking our sentimental optimism, abort their mistakes on the compost heap, which helps with the statistics.

Happily, while there is May there is hope, even for us. Something can yet be salvaged. There is, to begin with, the class of seed that is sown in May for best results, by which I mean the very tender annuals: morning glories, tithonias, cleomes and zinnias. None of these can stand the treachery of April anyway and grow faster for being brought into a month that will give them the illusion of a suitable climate. By the time that illusion has been dispelled, with any luck, they will have been tricked into viability and may begrudgingly serve out their indenture by flowering for you. It takes a good year for these plants to perform well for me, and it would be tragic to have a good year without them.

Angela Harding

"While there is May there is hope, even for us. Something can yet be salvaged"

After that I would not hesitate to sow any annual now. Have you noticed when you weed how quickly the native annuals germinate and flourish? Now that the soil is warm and the nights are kind you can sow directly if you choose. People sow early under glass because they want to get their display going as soon as possible, but annuals are more valuable later, in August, September and even October, after the perennials have had their burst and the garden needs a bit of freshness. You can make a virtue of it, if you learn to say with confidence that you are sowing some late annuals to extend the season. If you think they'll believe you.

When I say to begin with the morning glories I mean it. If you leave the things you are meant to sow in May until after you have sown the things you should have in April you'll be chasing yourself into June, and then your chances of getting the biennials under way before autumn are zero. The best way to catch up is by doing the thing that you should be doing now and working backwards. That way you are prioritising the tasks with the greatest chance of success. You will then be surprised how unimportant the longest-neglected job is when you come to it as you run out of steam at the end of the day. I usually find myself broadcasting the last few, and inevitably least favourite, packets among fading tulips. The possibility of a nice surprise is infinitely better than the guilt of unopened seed.□

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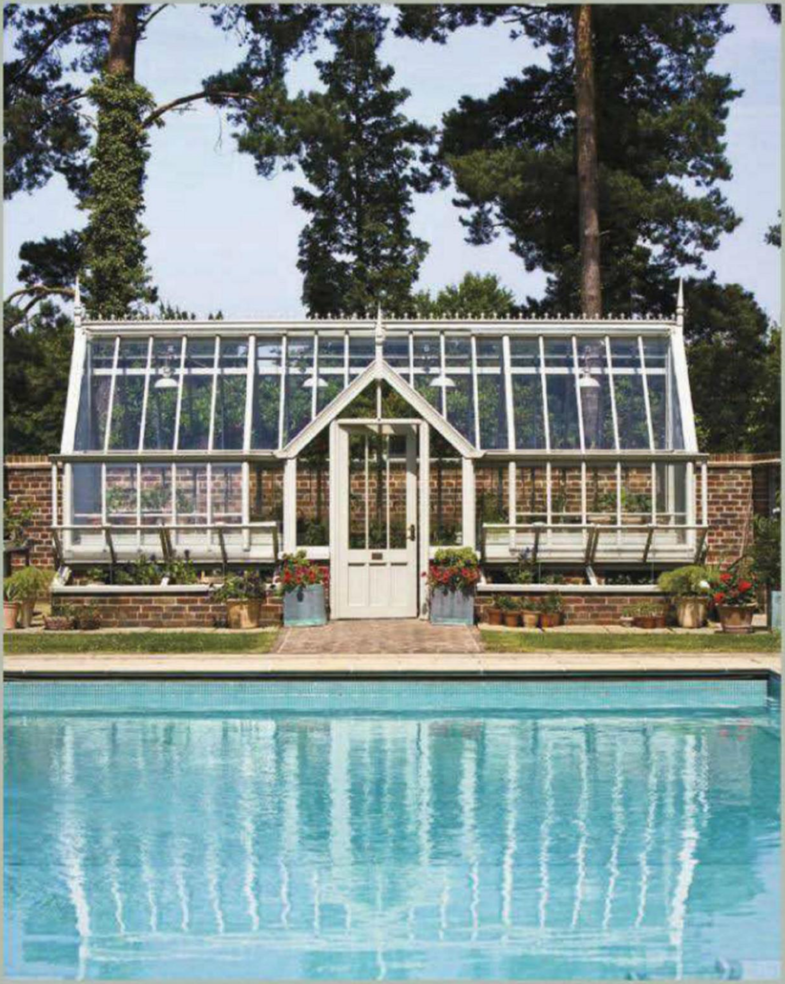

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